KRUSTY BURGER BRINGS BACK
LEGO SIMPSONS

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KRUSTY BURGER

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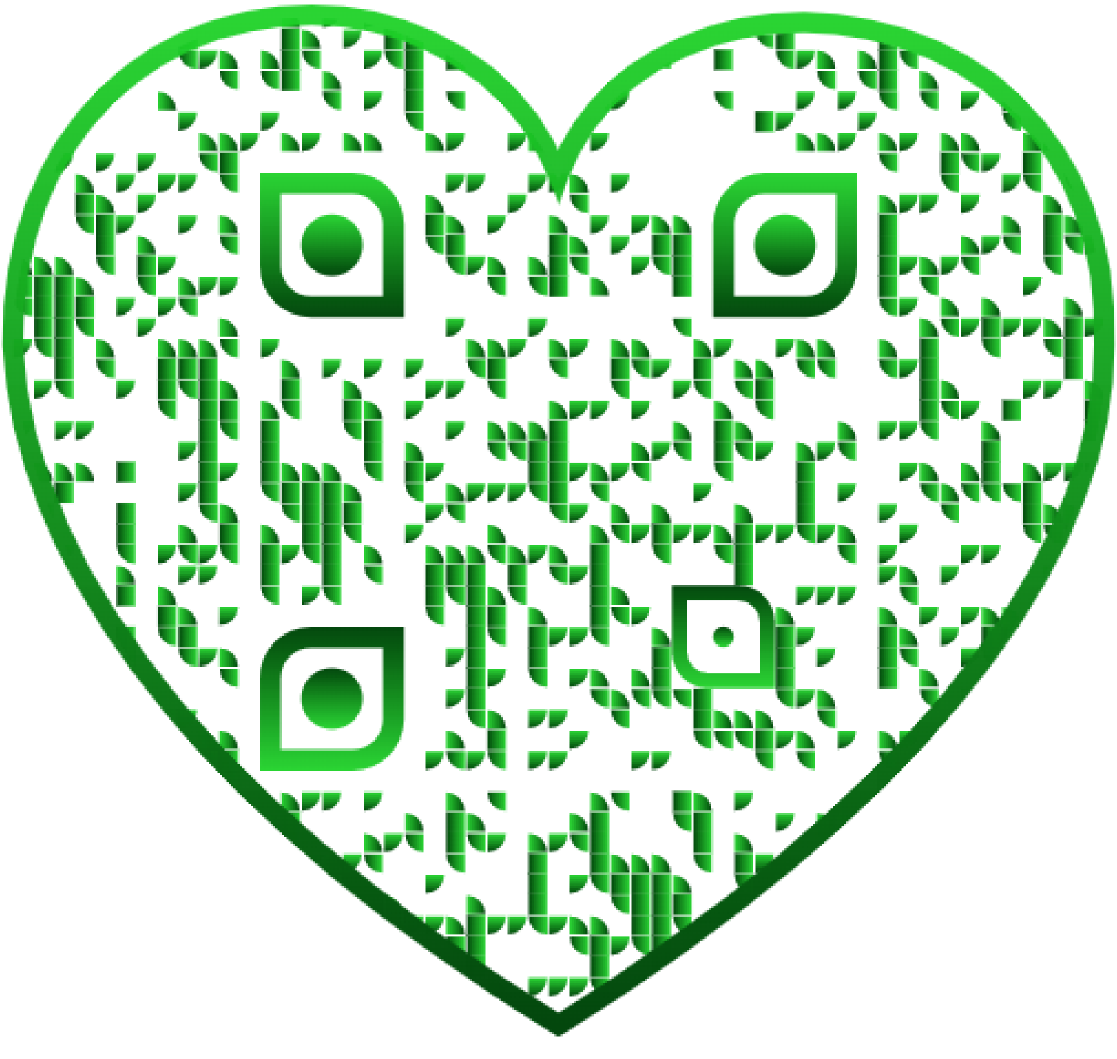

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THIS MONTH

There's a mysterious new format in LEGO Icons – Blocks is investigating and uncovering clues, but it's Design Master Antica Bracanov and colleagues who can piece them all together for us and explain the secrets behind 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook. A new type of set is always intriguing, so it's fascinating to hear where this one came from and how it developed to become an intricate London diorama.

Designer Jackson Hughes has been in a mindset far from London, instead locating himself on Tipoca City, capital of Kamino. He talks about delivering the awe-inspiring 75409 Jango Fett's Starship, the first Ultimate Collector Series version of the ship that arrived on screen 23 years ago in Star Wars: Attack of the Clones.

It won't have escaped the attention of The Simpsons fans that a certain clown with a passion for franchising, merchandising and general profiteering is having his upscale dining establishment represented in the brick. This month we are reviewing the long-awaited 10352 The Simpsons: Krusty Burger and showing you how to build a mini version.

Jurassic World Rebirth is coming to cinemas imminently and there are LEGO sets to prove it. The Reviews section focuses on the latest builds that come with rampaging dinosaurs and they are surprisingly varied – in a good way. If you're nostalgic for Dino Attack, the most bizarre prehistory infused LEGO theme ever, then you'll enjoy the instructions for a mini 7298 Dino Air Tracker in Retro.

We are presenting a new feature format in Create. Each month there will be a deep dive into an impressive model from the fan community – to kick it off, the spotlight is on Bart Deliën's beautiful, sprawling Venice with influence from Assassin's Creed. The talented builder explains what went into the model, then we show some of the tricks and techniques he used so you can embed them into your own creations.

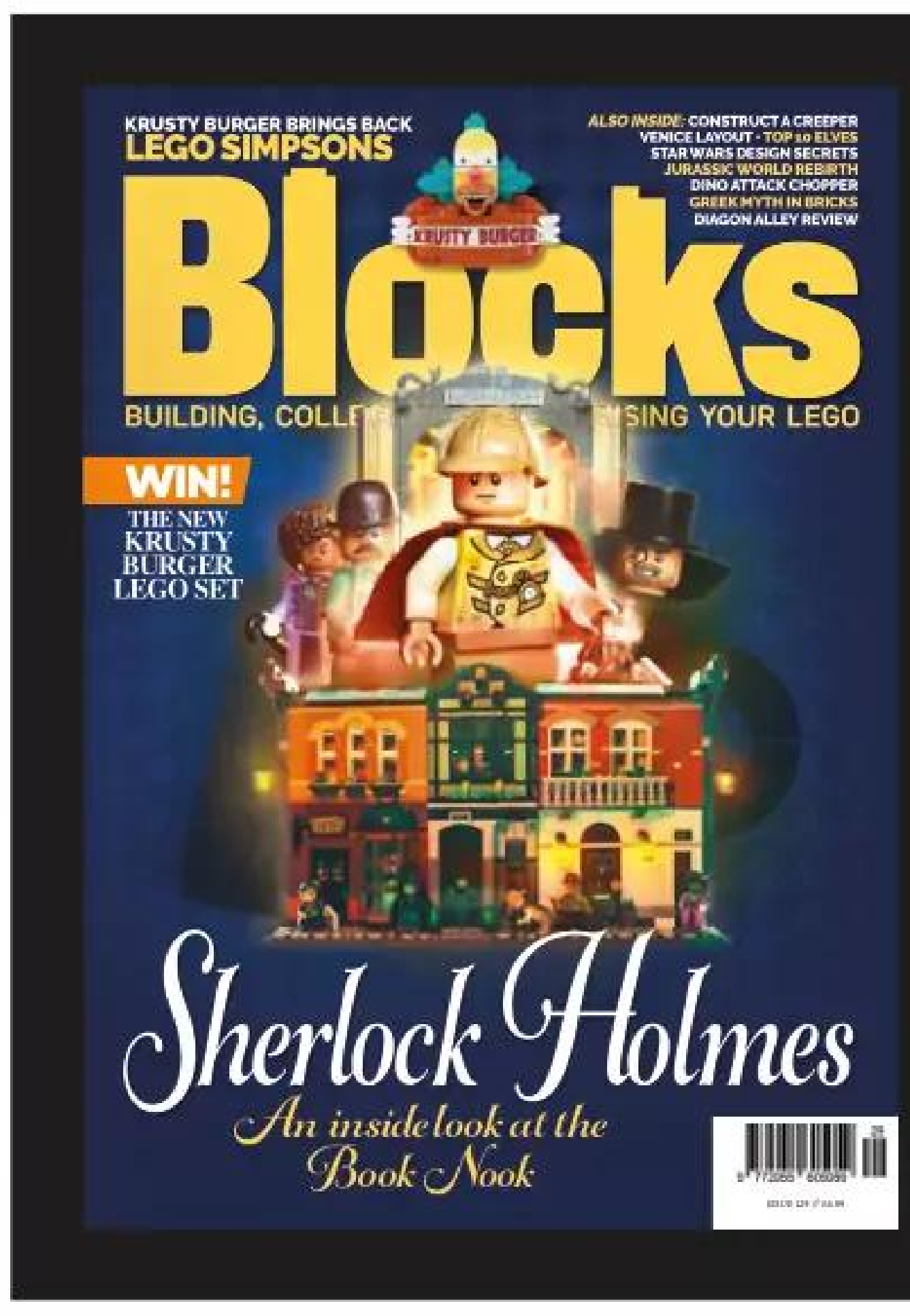
You can also discover history in Brickus Orpheus, a special exhibition at the Corinium Museum in Gloucestershire, where Greek mythology is presented in a series of LEGO builds this summer. Blocks finds out everything there is to know about the activation.

So yes, it is 116 packed pages again! Enjoy getting deep into the many facets of the LEGO hobby and if you pick up one of the new book nook sets, be sure to send in a photo of it on the shelf between copies of Blocks magazine.

Leg godt!

Graham

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
Editor
graham@blocksmag.com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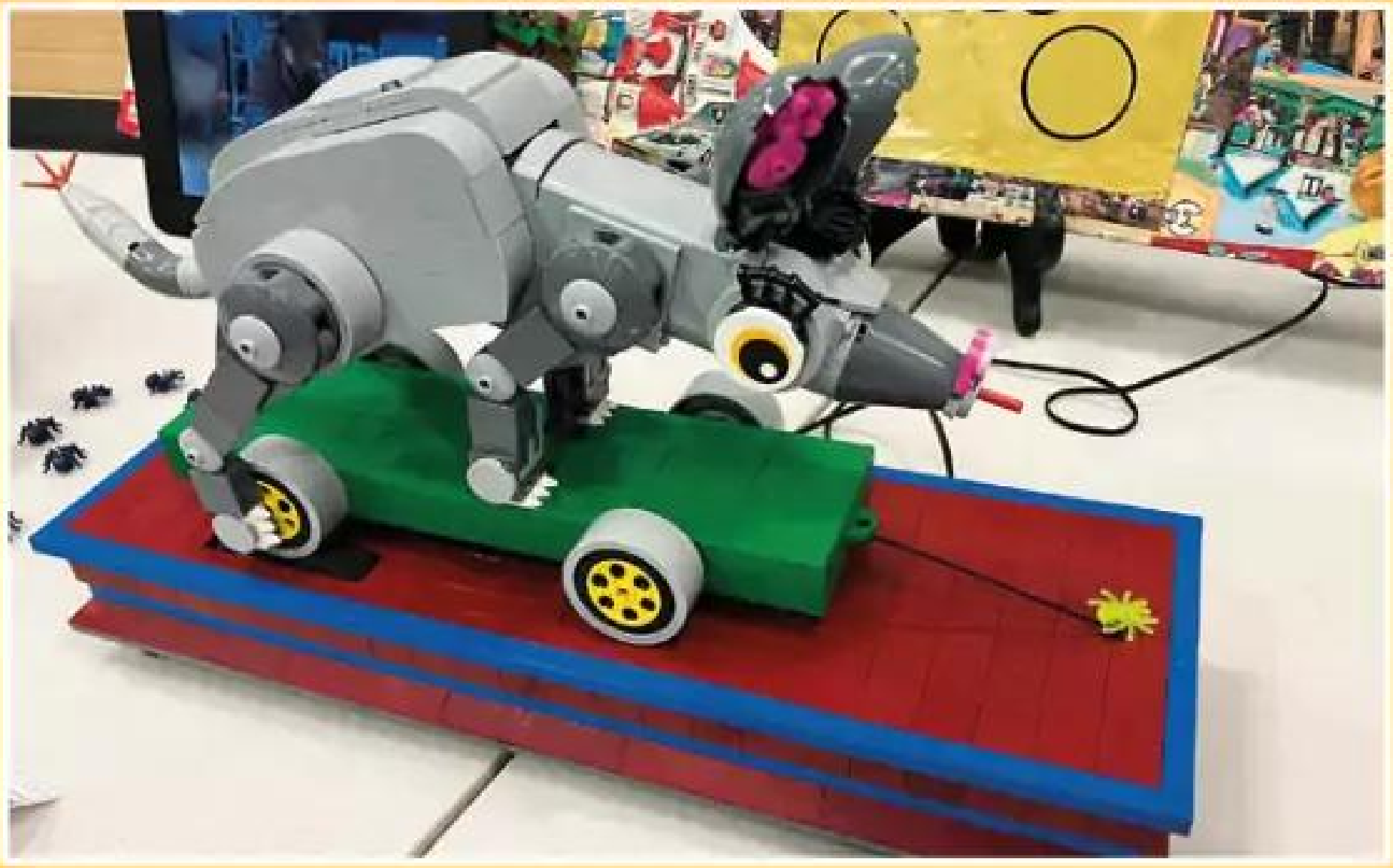
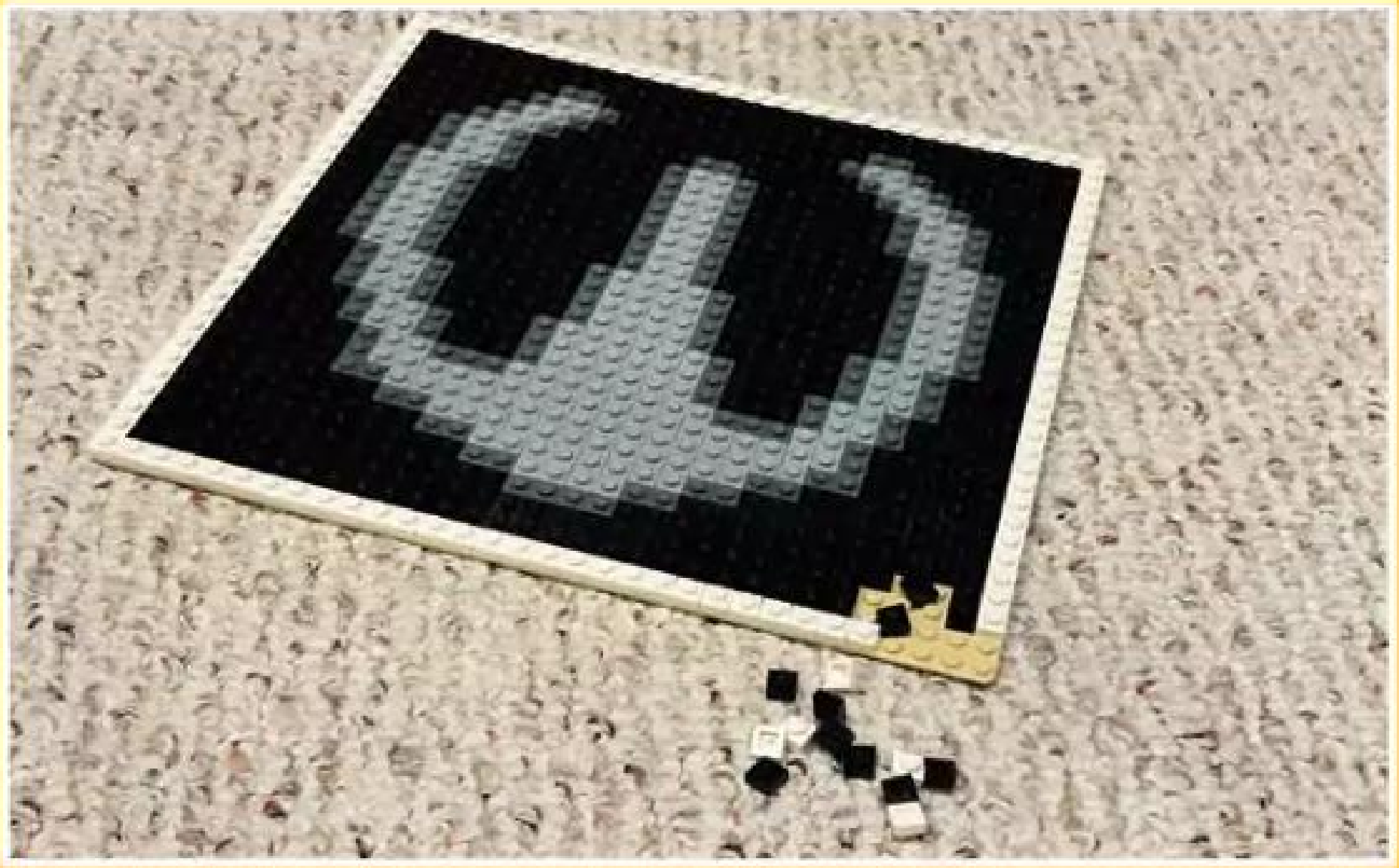
What we've been building...



At Bricks Cascade, Matt displayed this pull-along toy aardvark. Rolling the critter causes its tail to move and its tongue to protrude. Given how technically ingenious the moving model is, the award he won for it was well deserved.

For Anthony's birthday, Carolina was baking rather than building. This giant 2x2 cake held a modest number of candles and tasted as good as it looked. Naturally, the LEGO theme continued when Anthony unwrapped some of his presents.

Daniel got to grips with one of the strangest sets of all time – Galidor 8316 Kek Powerizer. The theme's villain is presented as a handheld console toy that delivers lines of dialogue. See Daniel try it out on the Blocks YouTube channel.



Ryan is already missing Star Wars: Andor, the critically acclaimed series that depicts the early days of the Rebel Alliance. He built a mosaic of the emblem from the show's intro sequence – because revolution is not for the sane.

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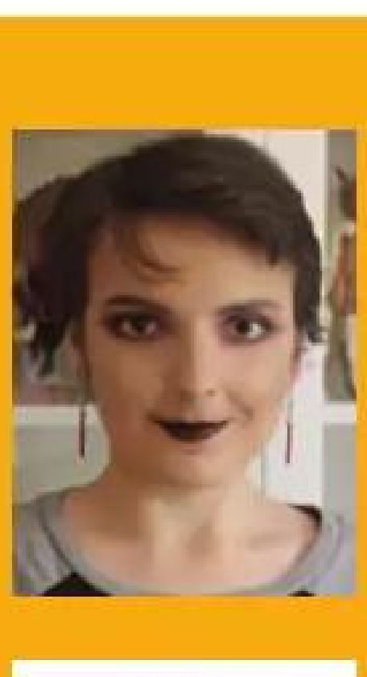
Editor
GRAHAM E. HANCOCK
A LEGO expert who can't remember life without the brick, Graham loves using that knowledge to bring Blocks to readers every single month.

Build Expert & Historian
DANIEL KONSTANSKI
Both a builder and a collector, Daniel has extensively researched the LEGO Group's history, making him an unrivalled fount of knowledge.

Build Specialist
SIMON PICKARD
If there's a way to put two bricks together, Simon knows it. He's an experienced builder who is always discovering new techniques.



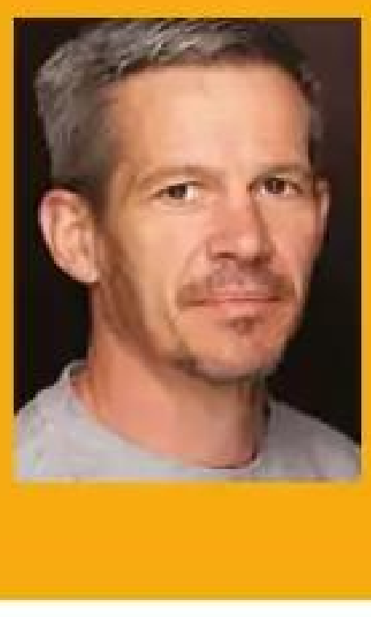
Features Writer
KAT REES-JAUKE
This life-long brick fan is always ready to dig deep into the latest sets to find out how they were conceptualised, designed and developed.

Features Writer
ANTHONY WALKER-COOK
With a passion for fantasy sets but a penchant for any box that features the LEGO logo, Anthony covers every aspect of the brick experience.

Reviews Writer
DAVE CARTLIDGE
Whether it's from Marvel Super Heroes, Friends, Technic or any other theme, Dave has the LEGO build know-how to assess the latest sets.

Build Curator
GENEVA DURAND
A 2x2 pillar of the community, Geneva is a respected member of the online creative LEGO scene with an expert eye for the best builds out there.

News Writer
RYAN EVERLETH
This LEGO aficionado has eclectic tastes, including Star Wars, Ideas and The Lord of the Rings. He always has a take on the latest news.



Photographer
PHIL WRIGHTON
Models never look better than when this prize-winning LEGO photographer has worked his magic to produce beautiful Blocks covers.

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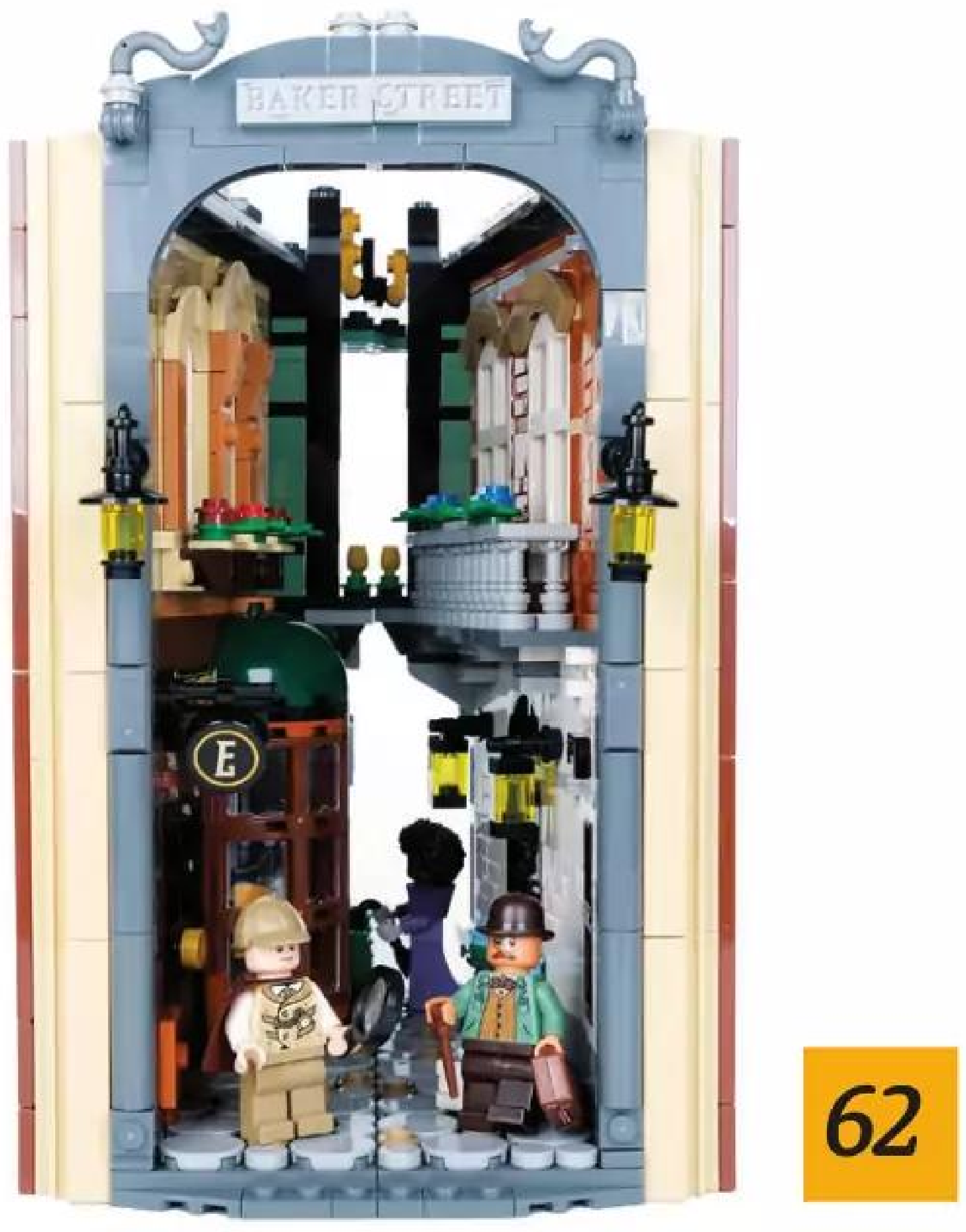

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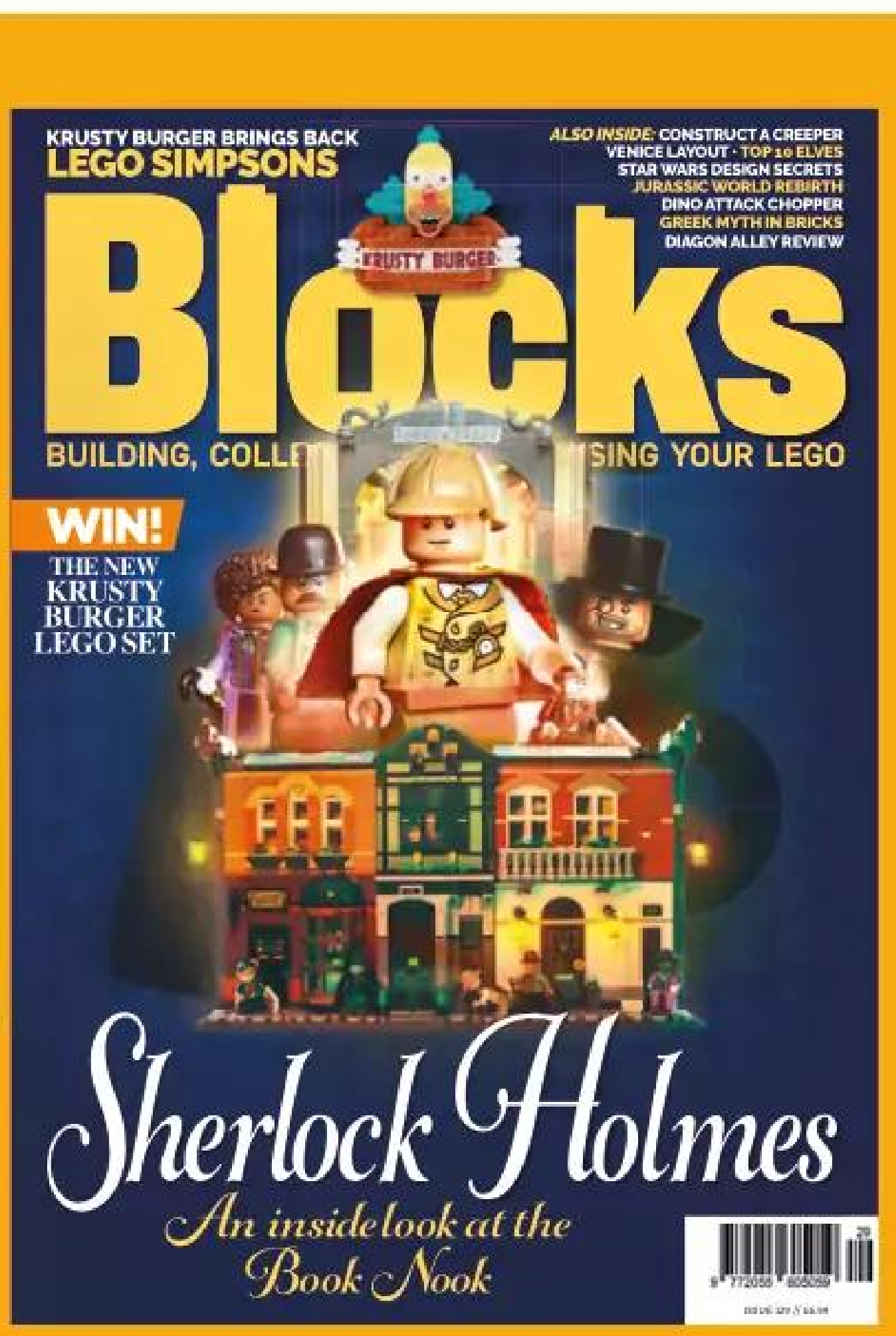

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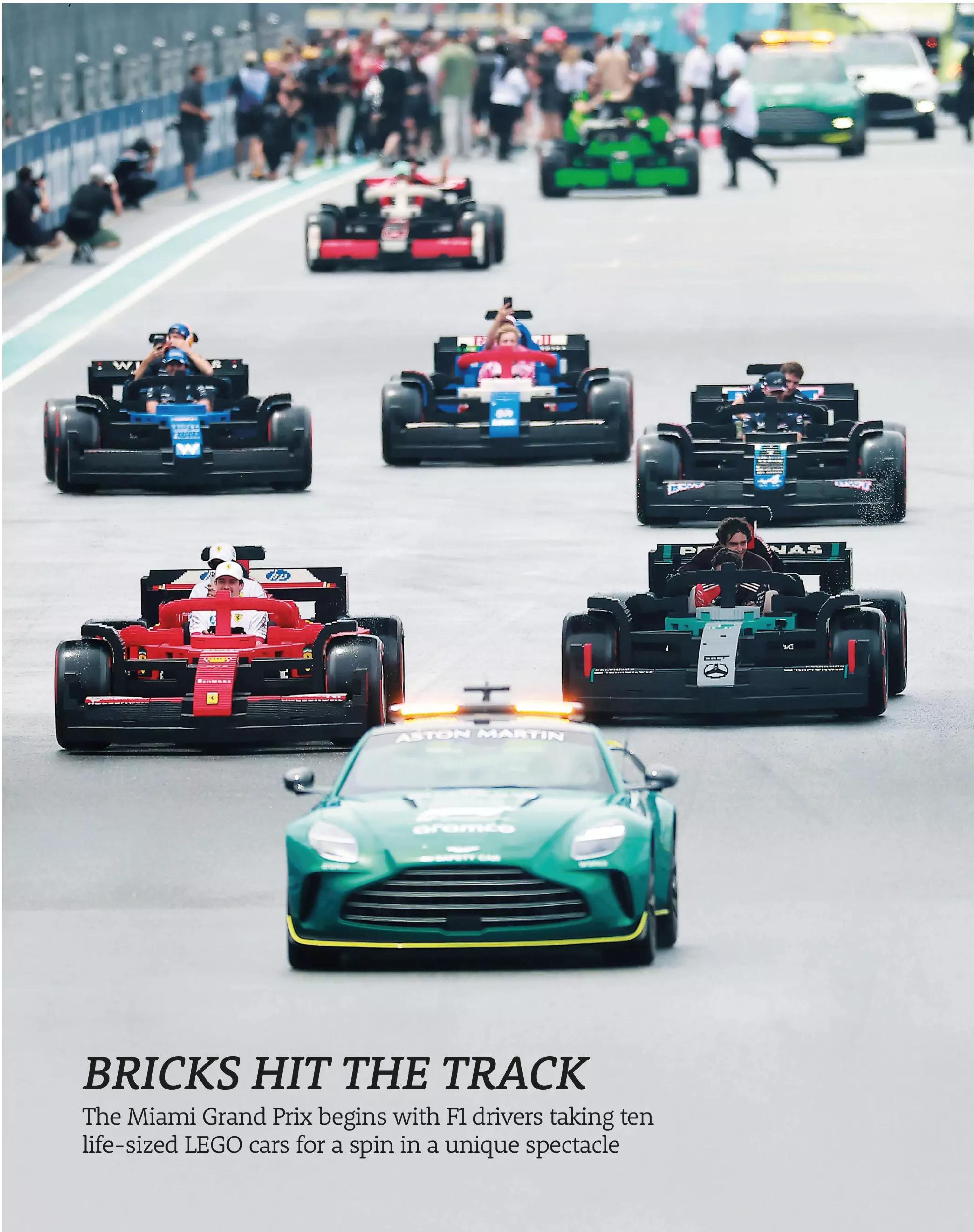

BRICKS HIT THE TRACK

The Miami Grand Prix begins with F1 drivers taking ten life-sized LEGO cars for a spin in a unique spectacle

Miami Grand Prix Driver's Parade, LEGO brick style.

Inset: The tyres are one of the few parts of the car not built with bricks.

With all of the exciting LEGO elements released each year and the constant innovation of new building techniques, it seems like the boundaries of what can be built with the LEGO System are pushed further and further all the time. One of the more out-there boundaries has been life-sized, drivable cars made from LEGO bricks.

Perhaps surprisingly, this is something that has been achieved before. Just last year, the LEGO Group partnered with McLaren Automotive to build a 342,817-piece replica of the McLaren P1, complete with real tyres and engine. The car was taken for a spin around Silverstone by McLaren F1 driver Lando Norris, winner of six Grands Prix.

One working LEGO car is impressive in and of itself, but as part of its partnership with F1, the LEGO Group has taken things one step further. Or nine steps further, to be precise. Ten drivable LEGO cars were brought out for the Miami Grand Prix Driver's Parade, one for each F1 team.

This fresh batch of LEGO cars all share a similar base design, with individual team logos and colours added as decoration later. The piece count for each is slightly higher than the McLaren P1 from last year, clocking in at just about 400,000 elements per car — that equates to a weight of 1,500kg for each.

In total, the ten cars required more than 22,000 hours of work to assemble in the LEGO Group's Kladno factory in the Czech Republic. The only thing these LEGO brick versions don't quite have on the real cars is speed — 20 km/h is all the brick-built ones can muster. Still an impressive feat for something made of LEGO bricks, just not quite enough to have a proper F1 race.

"At the LEGO Group, we are constantly striving to push the boundaries of what is possible. This latest challenge is a true testament to that, marking an extraordinary collaboration between the LEGO Group, Formula 1 and its 10 teams," said LEGO Chief Product and Marketing Officer Julia Goldin. "We know that drivable big builds have an unparalleled ability to evoke excitement amongst fans and are delighted to see the reaction unveiling 10 at the same time has brought."

"As a sport synonymous with innovation and pushing boundaries it was amazing to see another first for our sport as the big builds made their way around the track in the hands of the best drivers in the world," added Formula 1 Chief Commercial Officer Emily Prazer.

Both drivers from each of the 10 teams got a chance to take the LEGO cars for a lap, putting on a satisfying show for the fans in attendance. They looked like they were having great fun, with lots of smiles and laughter visible as they crawled around the track.

Those who weren't there needn't worry that they missed their chance to see real LEGO cars that can actually drive – all 10 are scheduled for a global tour that includes stops at races and F1 calendar moments as the LEGO Group and F1 continue their partnership throughout the racing league's 75th anniversary season.

RYAN EVERLETH

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2 **43277 Cruella De Vil's Car**
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43273 Disney Advent Calendar
Theme: *Disney*
Pieces: 231
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

75418 Star Wars Advent Calendar
Theme: *Star Wars*
Pieces: *263*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

4 **21280 Minecraft Advent Calendar**
Theme: *Minecraft*
Pieces: *300*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

76456 Harry Potter Advent Calendar
Theme: *Harry Potter*
Pieces: *278*
Price: *£29.99, $44.99, €34.99*

2

3

OUT NOW

3 **71492 Mateo's Fire Chameleon**
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Pieces: *443*
Price: *£44.99, $54.99, €49.99*

71499 Mateo's Spray Paint Truck
Theme: *DREAMZzz*
Pieces: *929*
Price: *£89.99, $99.99, €99.99*

71500 Nightmare Shark Submarine
Theme: *DREAMZzz*
Pieces: *1,413*
Price: *£129.99, $149.99, €139.99*

60471 Arctic Truck
Theme: *City*
Pieces: *1,057*
Price: *£99.99, $119.99, €109.99*

60470 Explorer Train
Theme: *City*
Pieces: *1,517*
Price: *£179.99, $199.99, €209.99*

1 **42673 Family Holiday Beach Resort**
Theme: *Friends*
Pieces: *1,140*
Price: *£119.99, $129.99, €129.99*

42654 Pony Ranch & Stable
Theme: *Friends*
Pieces: *727*
Price: *£59.99, $69.99, €69.99*

RETIRING SOON

40517 Vespa
Theme: *Creator*
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40569 London Postcard
Theme: *Creator*
Pieces: *277*
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5 **42115 Lamborghini Sián FKP 37**
Theme: *Technic*
Pieces: *3,696*
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10391 Over the Moon with Pharrell Williams
Theme: *Icons*
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75978 Diagon Alley
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Pieces: *5,544*
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76391 Hogwarts Icons
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Price: *£259.99, $299.99, €299.99*

21265 The Crafting Table
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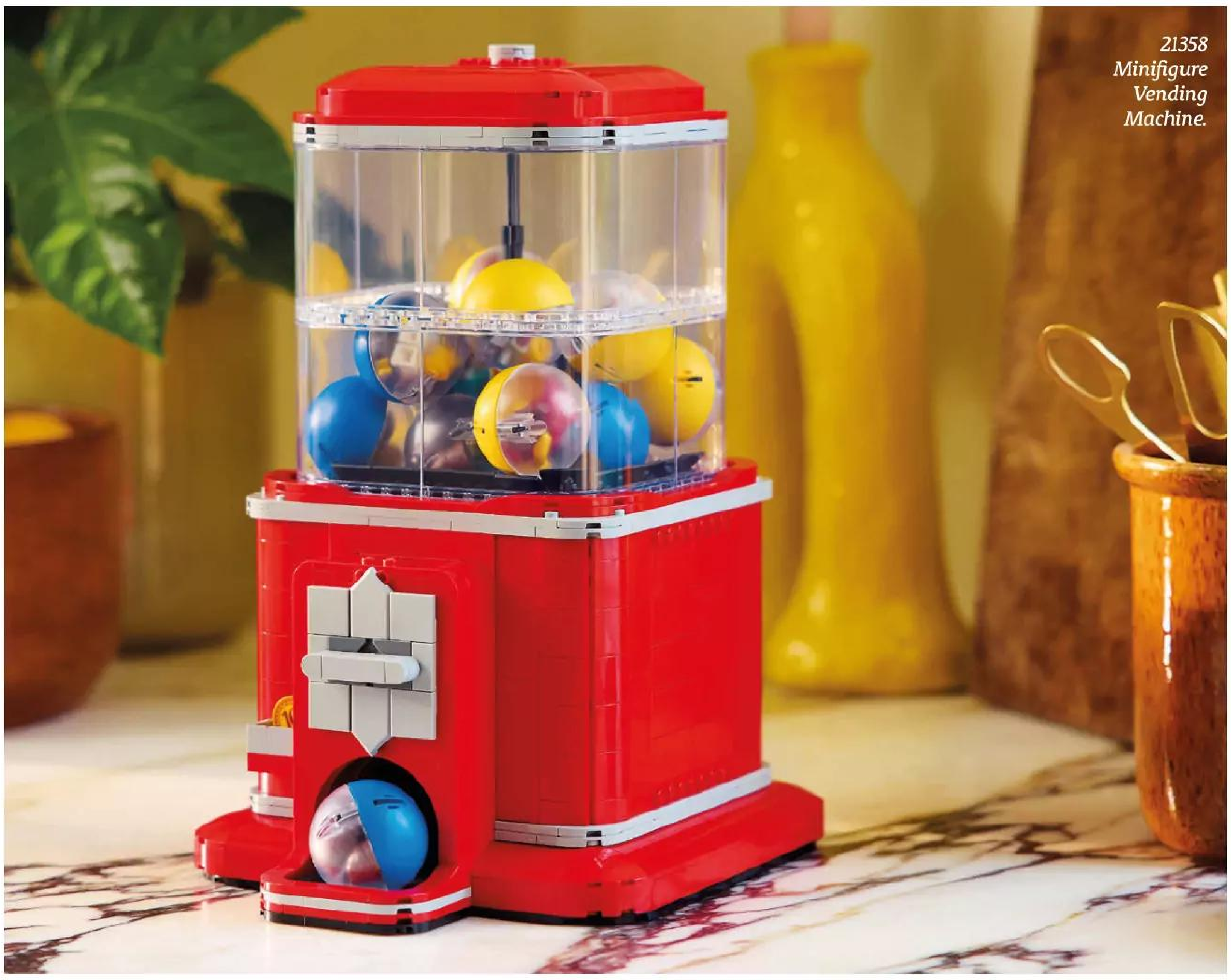
TRY YOUR LUCK FOR VINTAGE CHARACTERS

A functional model from Ideas celebrates a collection of retro LEGO themes and characters



21358 Minifigure Vending Machine.

There's no devilment in the 66th LEGO Ideas set, which has arrived on store shelves and in fans' collections. 21358 Minifigure Vending Machine is sure to delight fans of both functional models as well as retro themes that are fondly remembered.

Originally proposed by fan designer Rob Vangansewinkel, Minifigure Vending Machine skyrocketed in popularity on LEGO Ideas thanks to its novel concept and promise of a tantalising minifigure roster. The final set comes with 1,343 pieces and a whopping 16 minifigures.

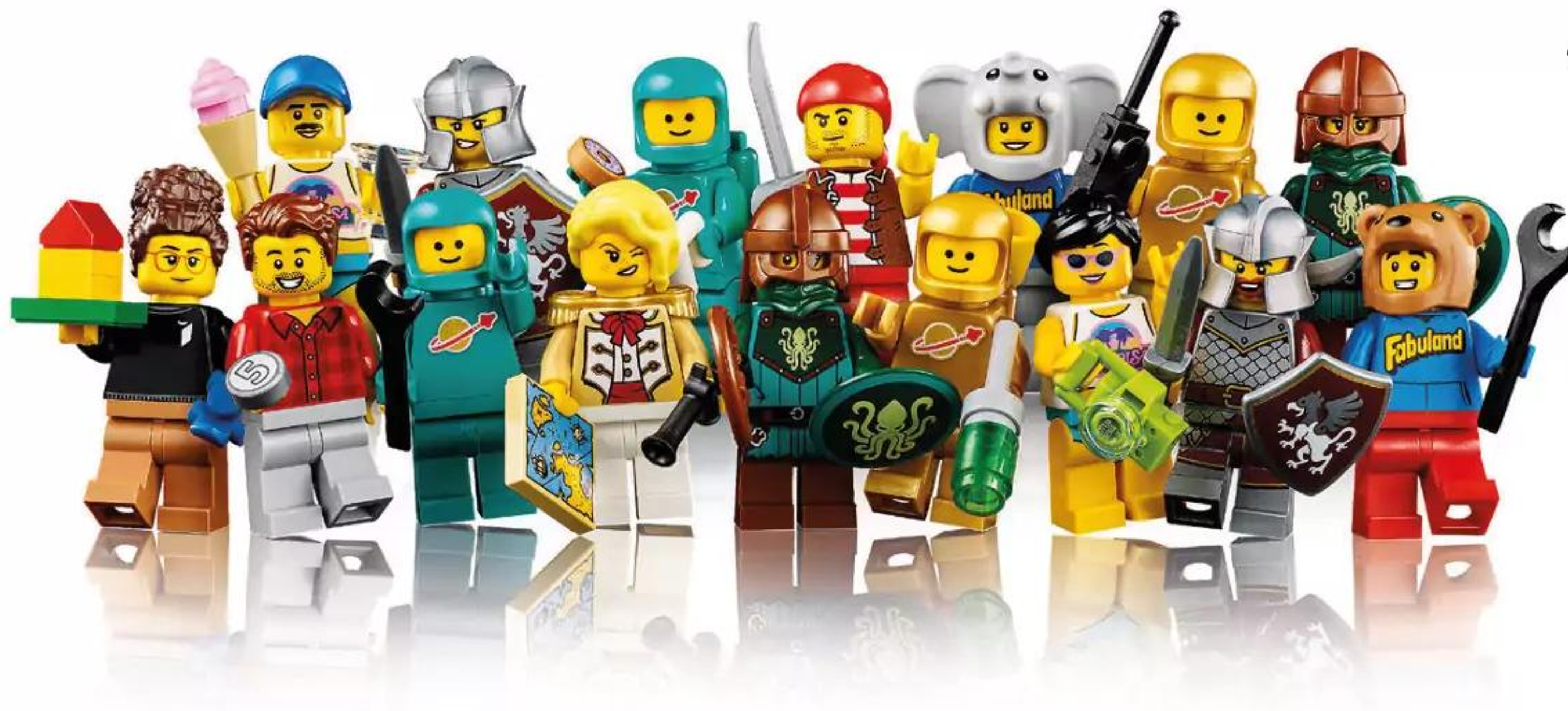
"We knew that fans would want to collect these," said Creative Lead Jordan Scott. "It made sense to give you two of the same one, but then we changed up the faces to make them male and female, because we saw that was quite popular with the D&D minifigures." The eight pairs of minifigures represent a total of five classic LEGO themes — two pairs double up and the last duo references the fan designer and LEGO Ideas team.

Teal and gold Classic Space astronauts join the ranks for the first time, and two new LEGO Castle factions are included — the Krakens and Griffins. The Krakens take traditional Castle designs in a new direction, envisioning a seafaring kingdom, while the Griffins are shown through simpler printing that allow the parts to be used in a more traditional way.

LEGO Fabuland and Paradisa, two classic themes from the 1980s and 1990s, don't get exact modern remakes like Space and Castle, rather they receive minifigures who are themselves fans of the classic themes, with both pairs having torsos proudly displaying the logos.

Pirates is the last theme to be represented, doing so with two characters who look like they'd be right at home in 21322 Pirates of Barracuda Bay. And the final pair features fan designer Rob, dressed in the colours of the vending machine, and a minifigure with a LEGO Ideas branded torso.

RYAN EVERLETH



The minifigures are inspired by classic LEGO themes.

Graham's take

"You need the set for the absolutely irresistible minifigures."

There is so much to say about this model that I really should get on with it before I run out of column space, but I first want to state clearly that the most impressive thing about 21358 Minifigure Vending Machine is that the designers seem to have made this thing work. Just to reiterate; a functional gumball machine. That is ridiculously impressive.

Yet despite the technical mastery the set displays, the minifigures have dominated the conversation around it – and understandably so. Rob Vangansewinkel's design had a mix of Collectible Minifigures and retro inspired minifigures.

At RLFM Days in Billund last year, we were told about two of the minifigures in the set that resulted from a fan vote – and I assumed that they'd be the only new minifigures in the set, while the rest would be existing minifigures. New Space and Castle would be more than enough to get fans' attention.

Well, Jordan Scott and the team continue Sam Johnson's mantra of going beyond the fan design to surprise and delight. Even if the functional model isn't your thing, you now need the set for this absolutely irresistible minifigures. New Space colours and Castle factions were factored in – now we can see nods to Pirates, Fabuland and Paradisa too.

The Pirates minifigures are the highlight for me, with a modern take on Bo'sun Will and Camilla from the classic theme. The former was a minifigure back in the day and looks like a generic pirate, so will be handy for those looking to crew their ships.

Camilla is deeper cut, a character from a comic book that launched with the theme in 1989 (and didn't have a minifigure). It is surprising that the LEGO Group are continuing to mine such source material, but in a pleasant way – her torso will be perfect for adding to layouts and for creating new characters to populate the world.

I knew there was too much to say about this set – the Paradisa and Fabuland minifigures are excellent choices too, but I suppose I'll have to save that for the review...

Brick CENTRAL

Get involved

BrickCentral is an online community of photographers who take creative photos of LEGO models and minifigures. We've always got some fun activities for LEGO fans to do like photography themes, contests, tips and community projects. Our Discord, Instagram and Tumblr communities are home to thousands of members from around the world who want to share and discover LEGO photography.

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Better than gold?

Matt Chiles shares his wisdom from the block market floor, cutting through the many myths around investing in and reselling LEGO sets

Last month I wrote about pricing LEGO sets that you plan to sell to your friends and acquaintances, as opposed to selling on a major site such as eBay or BrickLink. I was planning to sell a spare used copy of Futuron 6850 Auxiliary Patroller. I hoped to get $20 for it, about 20% less than the going rate on BrickLink and about 30% less than the going rate on eBay. I figured this would be good value for the buyer and good value for me, the seller, since I would be able to sell quickly without fees, without listing and shipping hassles.

Well, let's just say I learned a few things. I ended up bringing about 15 different used Classic Space sets to sell at the garage sale, including my 6850, all priced using that scheme. I sold three sets – I ended up discounting the 6850 considerably to sell it. It sold for $13 to a teenage convention attendee, who only had $13 in his pocket and was looking for something his dad would appreciate. I'll bet his dad appreciated it!

The question then becomes, 'why didn't all of these sets sell at these great prices?' The answer, I think, has to do with the market I was selling to. Since the garage sale portion of Bricks Cascade was not open to the public there were only about 600 LEGO fans who were potential buyers. A large portion of them checked out the garage sale – and there was lots of great stuff. Besides Classic Space, people were hawking bulk bricks, Collectible Minifigures, gift with purchase sets, non-brick LEGO items and even rarities like BrickLink exclusives.

However, I wasn't the only person who left with the majority of the stuff I came with. There were too few buyers for the number of vendors and there were not enough good deals. I didn't see anyone liquidating stuff cheap. This event demonstrated that if you really need to get rid of your LEGO bricks quickly without the effort of listing on a big site, then you must discount severely – probably by more than 30%.

My son, Nate, made a sale. He sold 40729 Shackleton's Lifeboat, a gift with purchase set, for $75. They are currently selling for about $95 on eBay, so he sold it for a discount of about 20%. Had he sold it for $95 on eBay it would have cost him about $13 in fees and another $7 for shipping. He had no hassle and netted the same amount – the set sold because it was highly desired.

Fewer people want old Futuron sets. Or Classic Space. Or a myriad of other themes. This is a reminder that when investing in LEGO sets, invest in something people will want. It is also a reminer to sell when people still remember what the set is – few remember Futuron, but many remember 40729 Shackleton's Lifeboat.

Memory of LEGO sets is a weird and cool thing. I am LEGO Space complete. At Bricks Cascade I set up a large layout in the classic sets area with every single Space set from 1978 through M-tron in 1990. It gloriously covered an impressive 95 baseplates, with the monorail circling it all.

The coolest thing about this display, however, was watching the public come by. Old greying and balding guys (like me) in their 50s would point and say, 'I had that set… and that one… and that one there,' or, 'wow, this brings back the memories.' They would point at a ship like 6980 Galaxy Commander (6880) and say, 'I had a ship just like that, but it was bigger…' (in reality they were smaller). Their voice would crack and tears would come to their eye as visions of being nine years old and swooshing a spaceship through the house suddenly became real again. That was the best part of displaying the layout.

Many of us remember those Classic Space sets, but few of us still collect them. Us collectors are getting old. We have adult kids who are much more interested in a model of the Endurance than the Galaxy Explorer. I have two daughters getting married this summer and I will likely soon be a grandfather. Will my grandkids care at all about Classic Space sets? Will they even care about the Endurance or Shackleton's Lifeboat?

As you buy and sell your LEGO sets, new and old, remember the joy they brings to others, young and old. Let the kids and grandkids touch them, play with them, fall in love with them. Share the joy, spread it around and in particular don't forget to keep swooshing those old spaceships around the house, the yard – and the fan conventions.

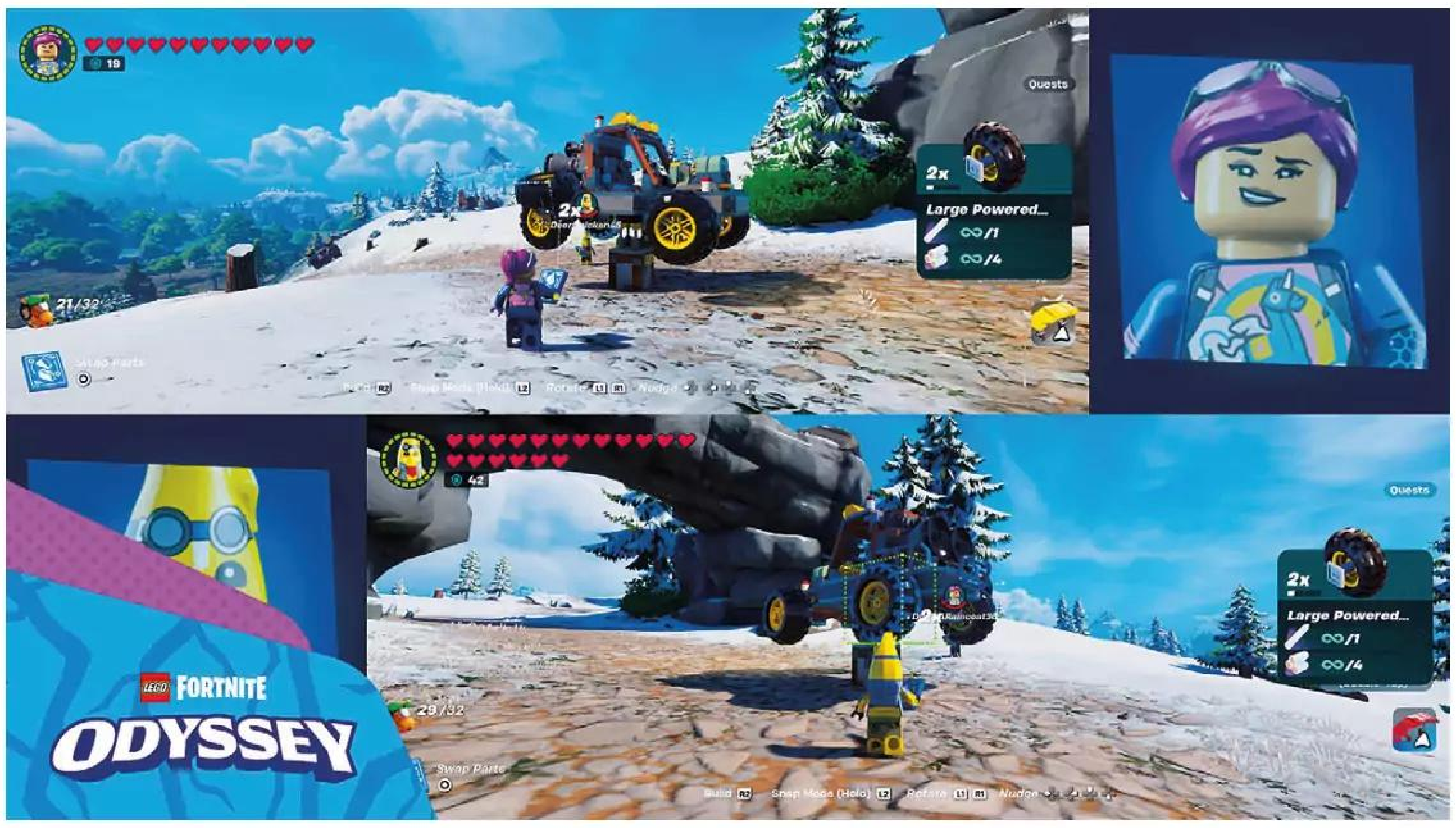
MATT CHILES

The information in this column about plastic bricks is not intended to constitute – and should not be construed as – investment advice.

Gaming Download

DOUBLE THE FUN IN FORTNITE ODYSSEY

Fortnite continues to offer new features, as couch co-op allows players to collaborate while in the same room



LEGO Fortnite Odyssey has encouraged collaboration and co-operative play since it launched, with players able to invite up to eight friends online to their Island to help with adventuring across the open world. While this online play allows friends to connect around the world if playing on a computer, there have not been options for playing together as couch co-op on a video game console. That all changed with the launch of LEGO Fortnite Odyssey Duo in the latest update.

Duo lets players connect via the new split screen feature on PlayStation and Xbox consoles. It literally splits the screen in half for two players to enjoy the game in the same physical and digital space – known as couch co-op. Players can use separate controllers for their avatars, to work together to build things, gather resources or take on boss fights.

There is also no limit to which world players can engage in together. Split-screen mode is available in all previous worlds and brand new ones, so there is no need to create a fresh Island save file in order to play together on console. It's also possible to play with two controllers in any difficulty setting, whether it's building unlimited designs in Sandbox Mode or braving the Storm-Wild monsters in Expert Mode. The only thing that is not possible, just like in online multiplayer, is for a shared inventory between players, so you will have to swap items back and forth or use chests as a shared resource.

Activating split screen mode is a streamlined process on console. It's just a case of launching LEGO Fortnite as normal and then connecting a second controller to your console. After selecting the second player's console account, they'll be prompted to link it to their own Epic account. Once the accounts are successfully linked, the second player will automatically enter the lobby and you'll be able to launch the game.

LEGO Fortnite Odyssey Duo is the latest addition to LEGO Fortnite, which is available to play now in split screen couch co-op on PlayStation and Xbox with the v34.40 update. The online multiplayer version of LEGO Fortnite Odyssey is available to play through PC and all consoles.

KAT REES-JAUKE

First Order Base

"Today is the end of the Republic," declared General Hux as he stood on the central stage of Starkiller base with lines of Stormtroopers watching with anticipation. It's a memorable scene in Star Wars: The Force Awakens, taking clear inspiration from history. Now you can bring the black, grey and red aesthetic of the First Order to your Star Wars builds in LEGO Fortnite. This rendition of the base is very accurate to its on-screen depiction and features the hexagonal insignia on the banners, all crafted with LEGO elements.

New Fortnite characters

Captain Phasma

Joining the ranks of Star Wars characters available to play within the game is the recognisable chrome armour of Captain Phasma. She looks incredibly similar to her minifigure in 75201 First Order AT-ST. This version makes use of the graphics to add some extra highlighting details.

Renard

With a kitsune (nine-tailed fox) inspired mask and sharp three-piece suit, Renard oozes sophistication. The detailing on his ensemble is amazing, with red trim along his cuffs and collar, as well as a matching handkerchief.

The Widow

While Renard is tricking characters through his cunning, the Widow is out to break hearts. This is the perfect skin to get ready for Halloween as she wears a ruined wedding dress with fiery lace and an eyepatch with a broken heart printed on it.

Fortnite phraseology

ASSIGNING NAMES

When setting up Villages and Barns, players are prompted to either randomly generate or create names. This can seem like a daunting process as keeping track of a large world of animals and Villages could mean duplicating a name or two – especially as up until the v34.00 update, all names were permanent.

Thankfully that has recently changed, taking the stress out of the process. Name assignments can now be edited for Villages and Barn Animals. It's easy to change names and assign something more memorable for one of your Villages when you need to.

Contest of the Month

Get involved

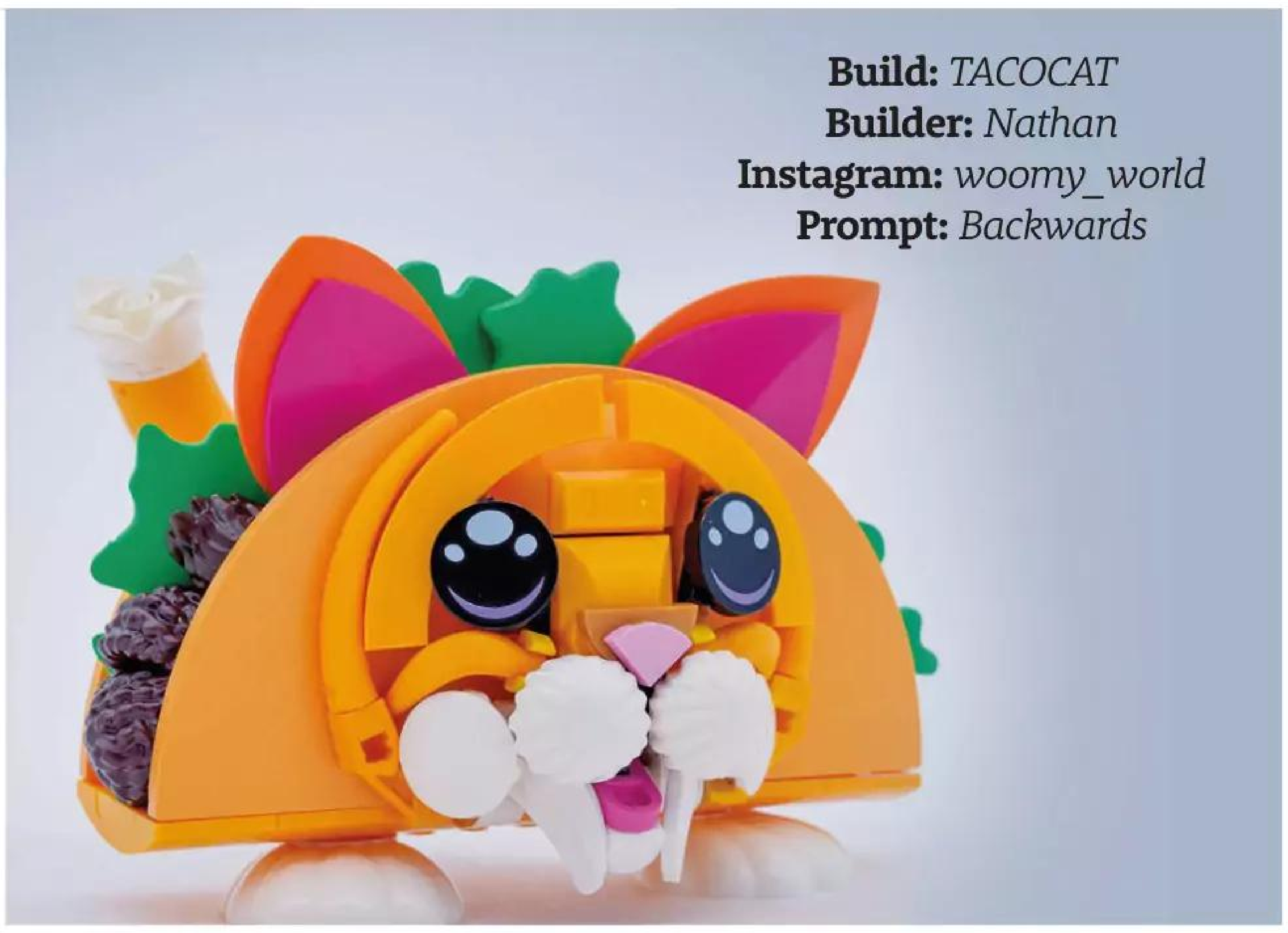
Website: *roguebricks.de*
Instagram: *@roguebricks_lug*

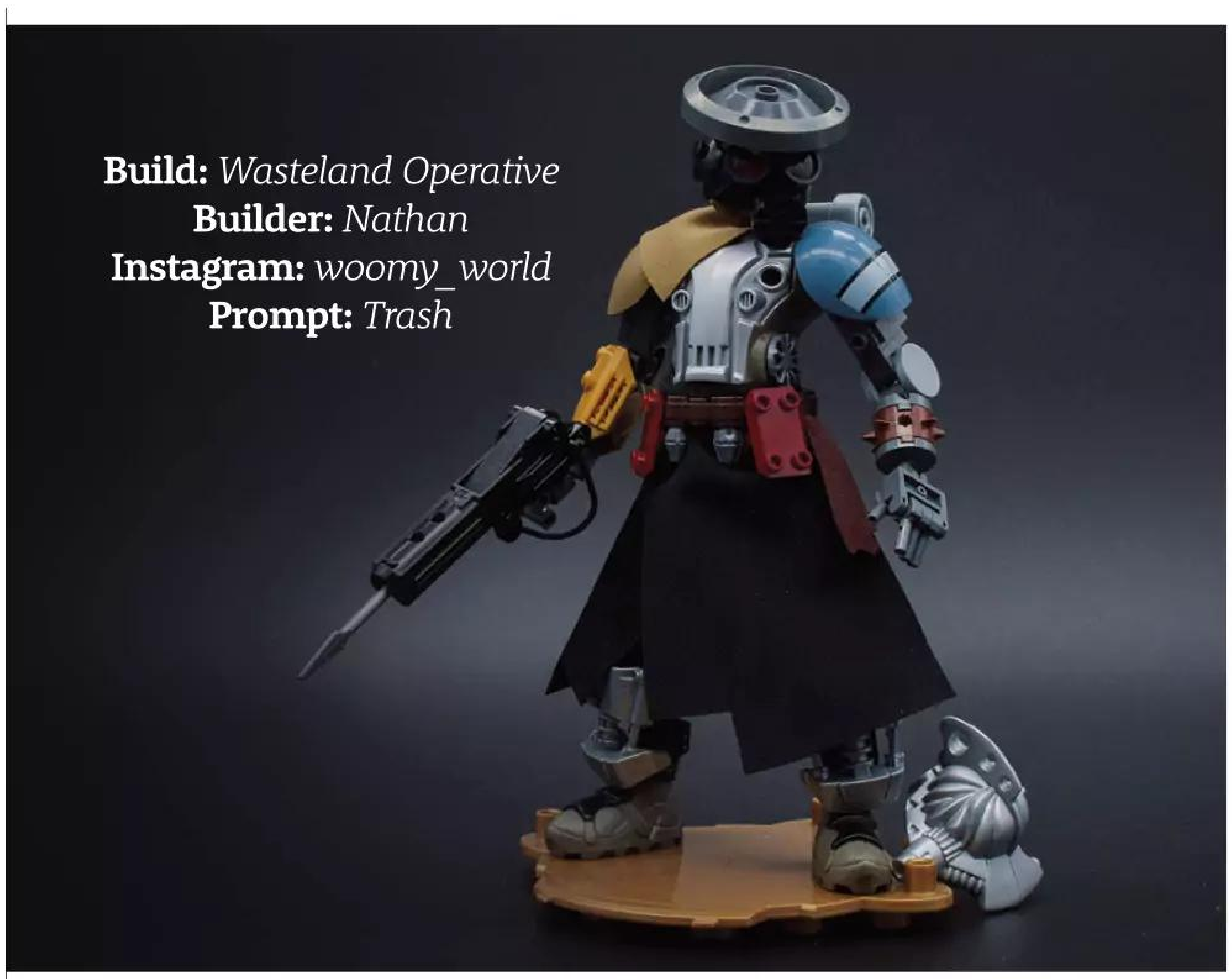
101 ROGUE OLYMPICS

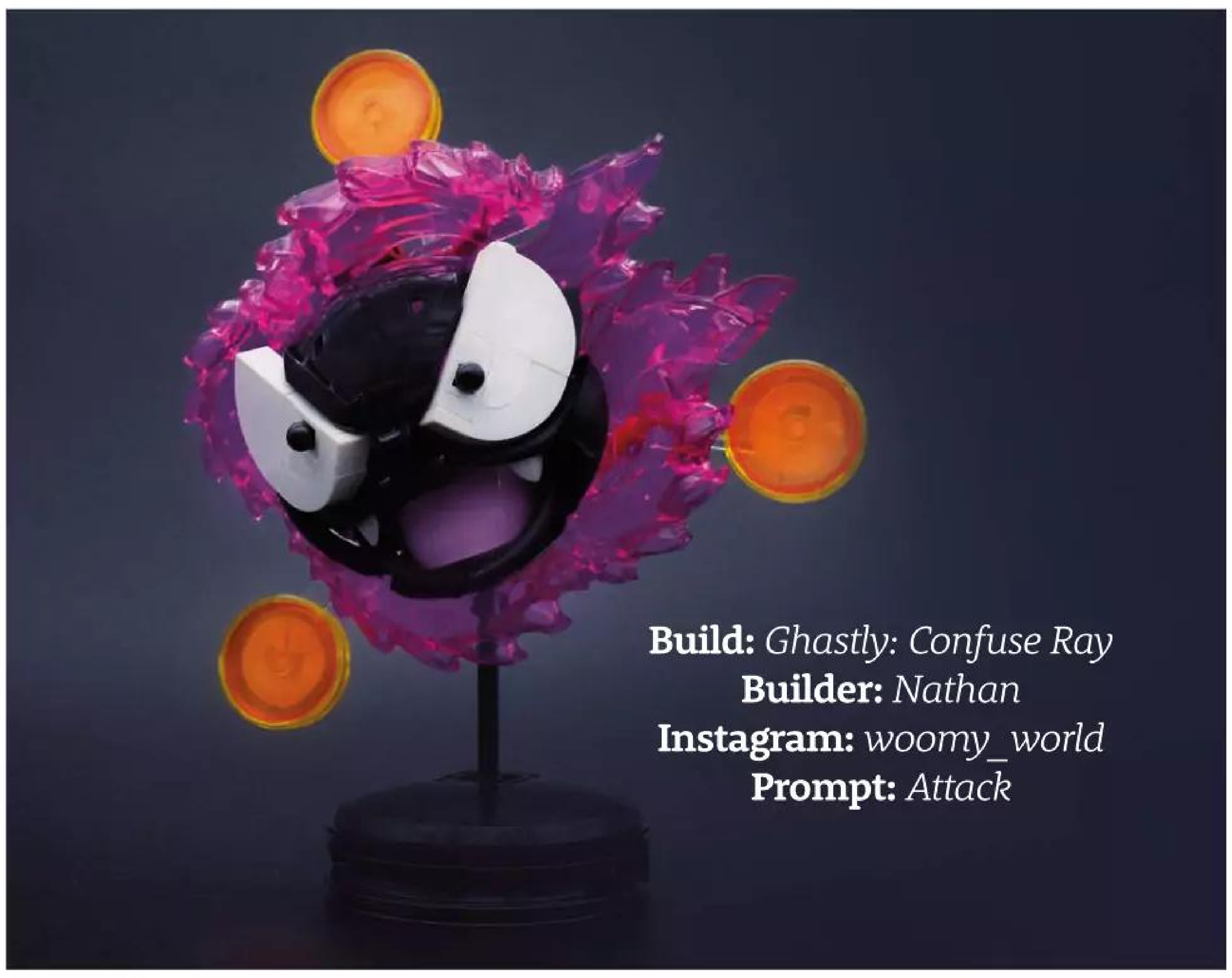
With a limit of 101 bricks per entry, this building challenge is all about seeing the smallest pieces used in a surprising way

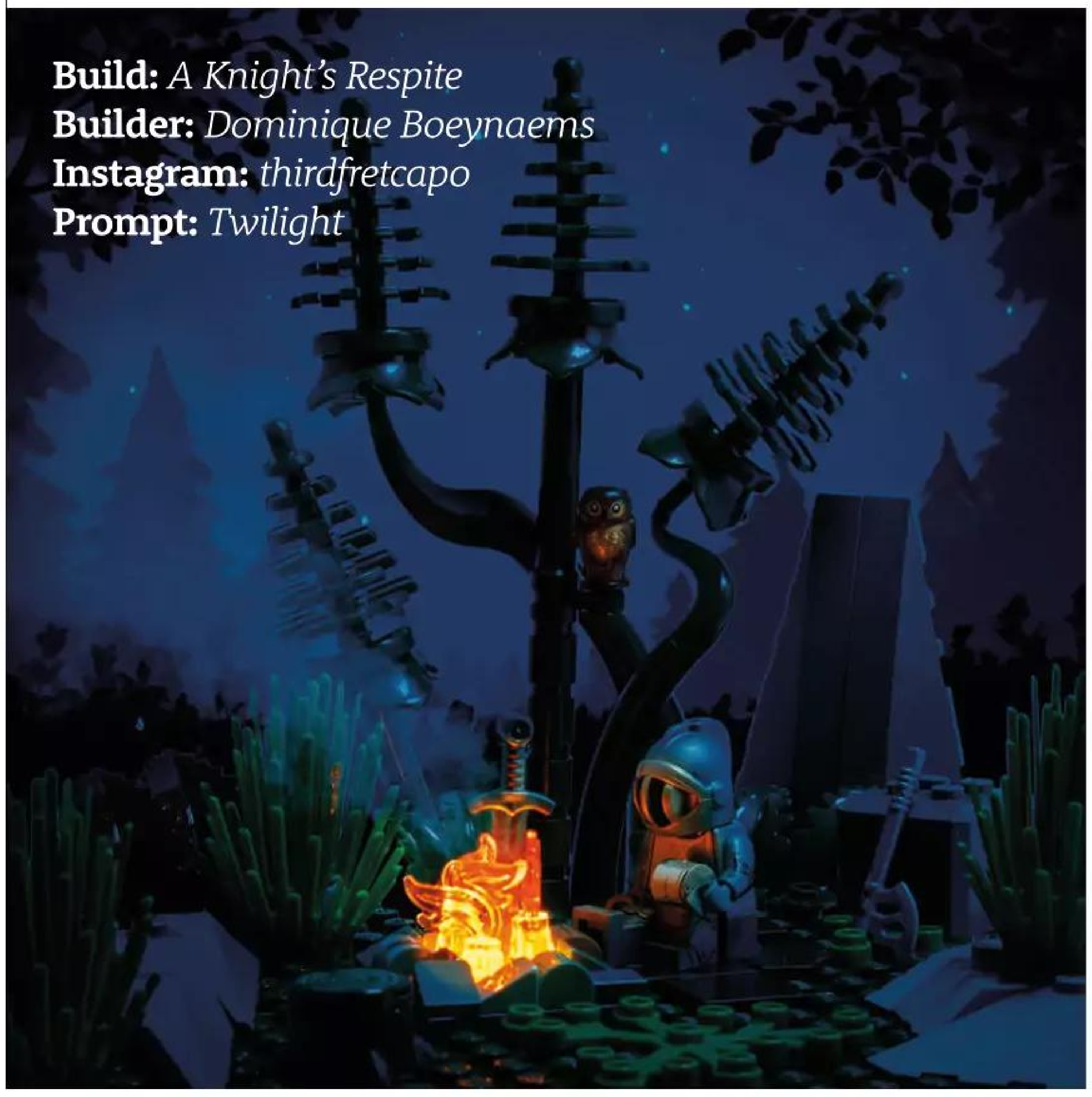
The annual Rogue Olympics 101 Part Challenge is a creative competition like no other. Every year, categories change, builders come and go, but one thing stays the same – a strict maximum of 101 parts for each entry. Building with that kind of limitation is about enjoying each brick, which is probably why entries for Rogue Olympics are some of the most playful builds of the year. Each of the eight rounds lasts a week, so there are plenty of chances for builders to show off their ingenuity while dipping into a variety of themes, with prompts ranging from trash, through twilight, to attack.

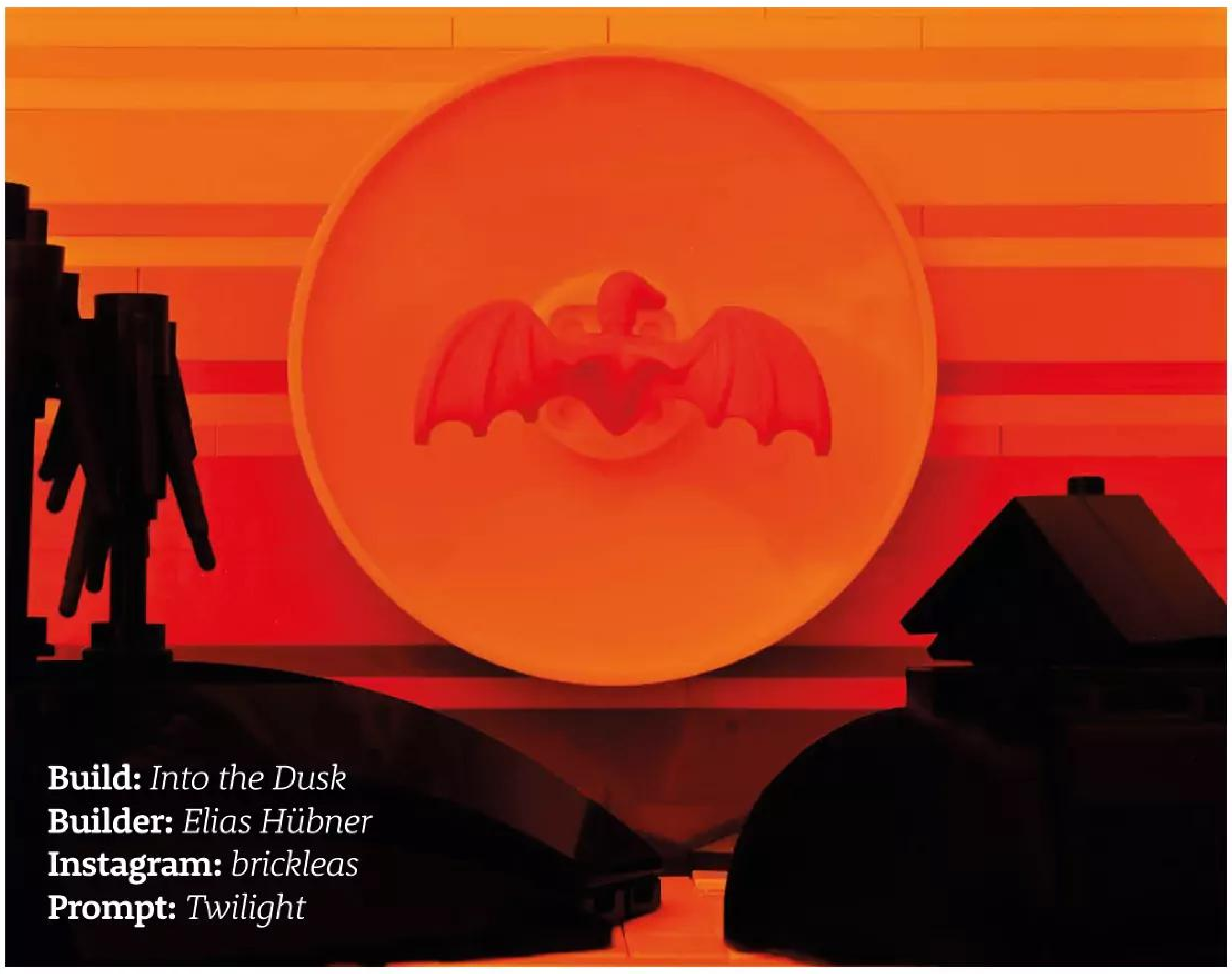
GENEVA DURAND

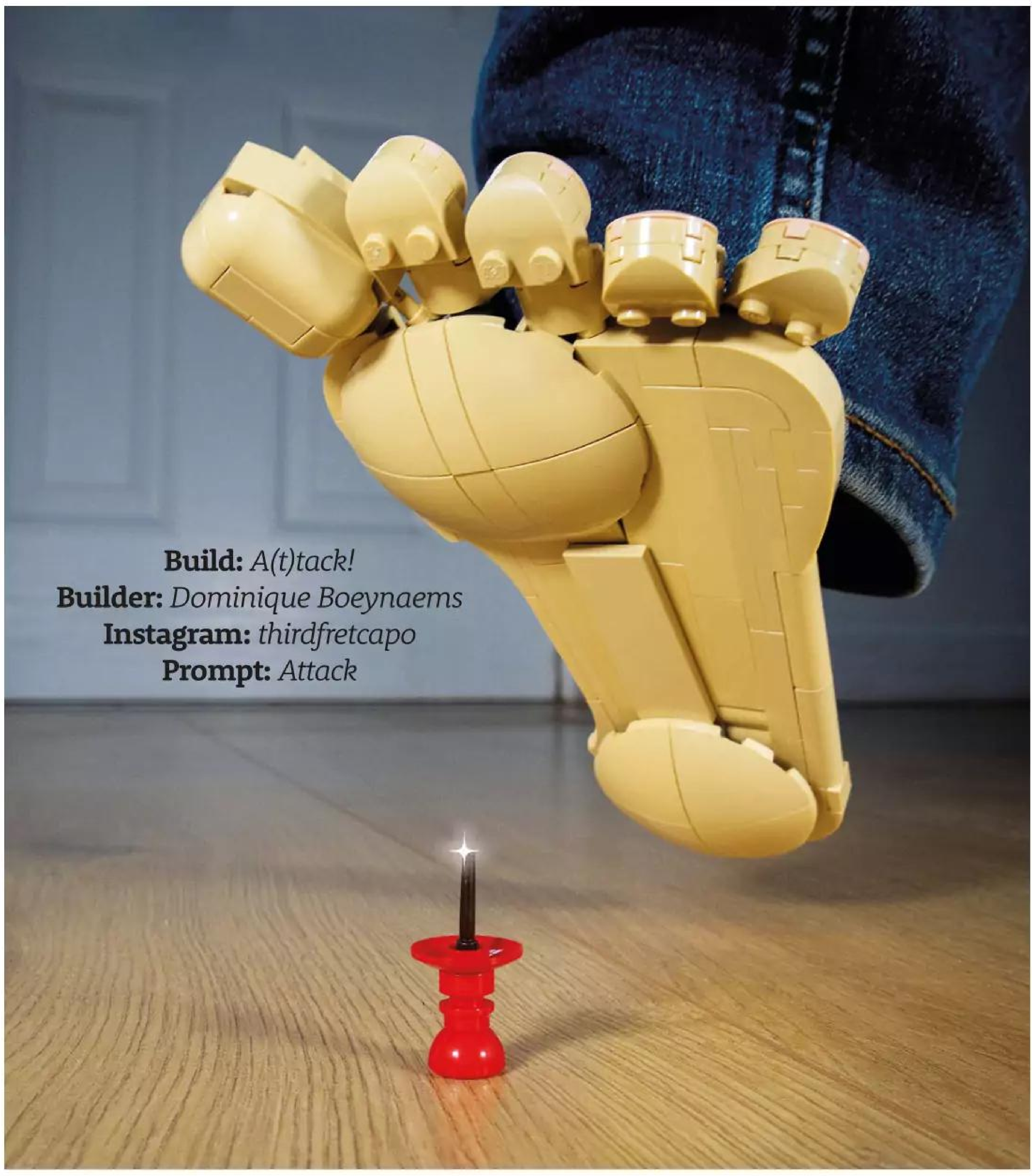

Build: *TACOCAT*
Builder: *Nathan*
Instagram: *woomy_world*
Prompt: *Backwards*


Build: *Wasteland Operative*
Builder: *Nathan*
Instagram: *woomy_world*
Prompt: *Trash*

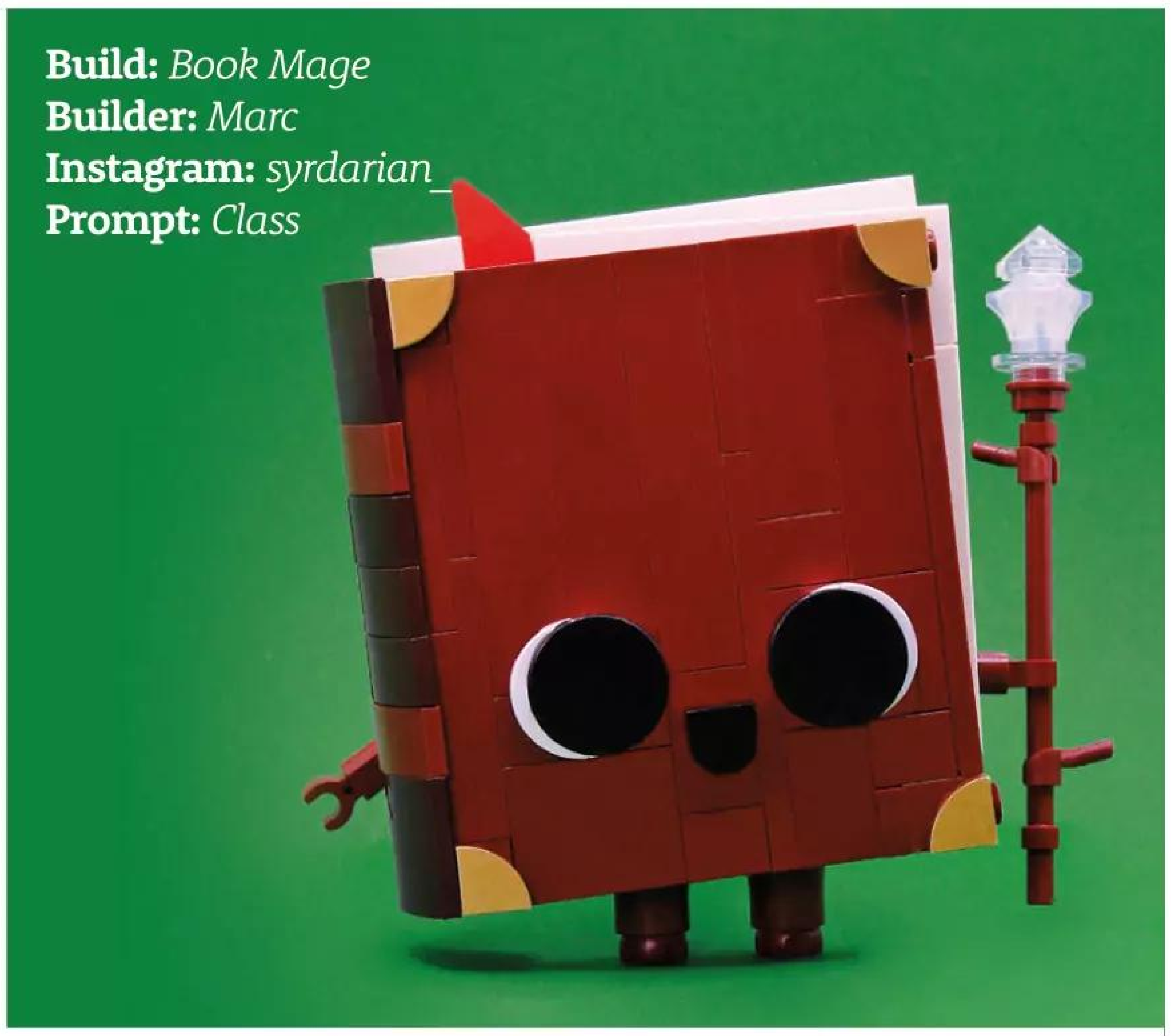

Build: *Ghastly: Confuse Ray*
Builder: *Nathan*
Instagram: *woomy_world*
Prompt: *Attack*


Build: *A Knight's Respite*
Builder: *Dominique Boeynaems*
Instagram: *thirdfretcapo*
Prompt: *Twilight*

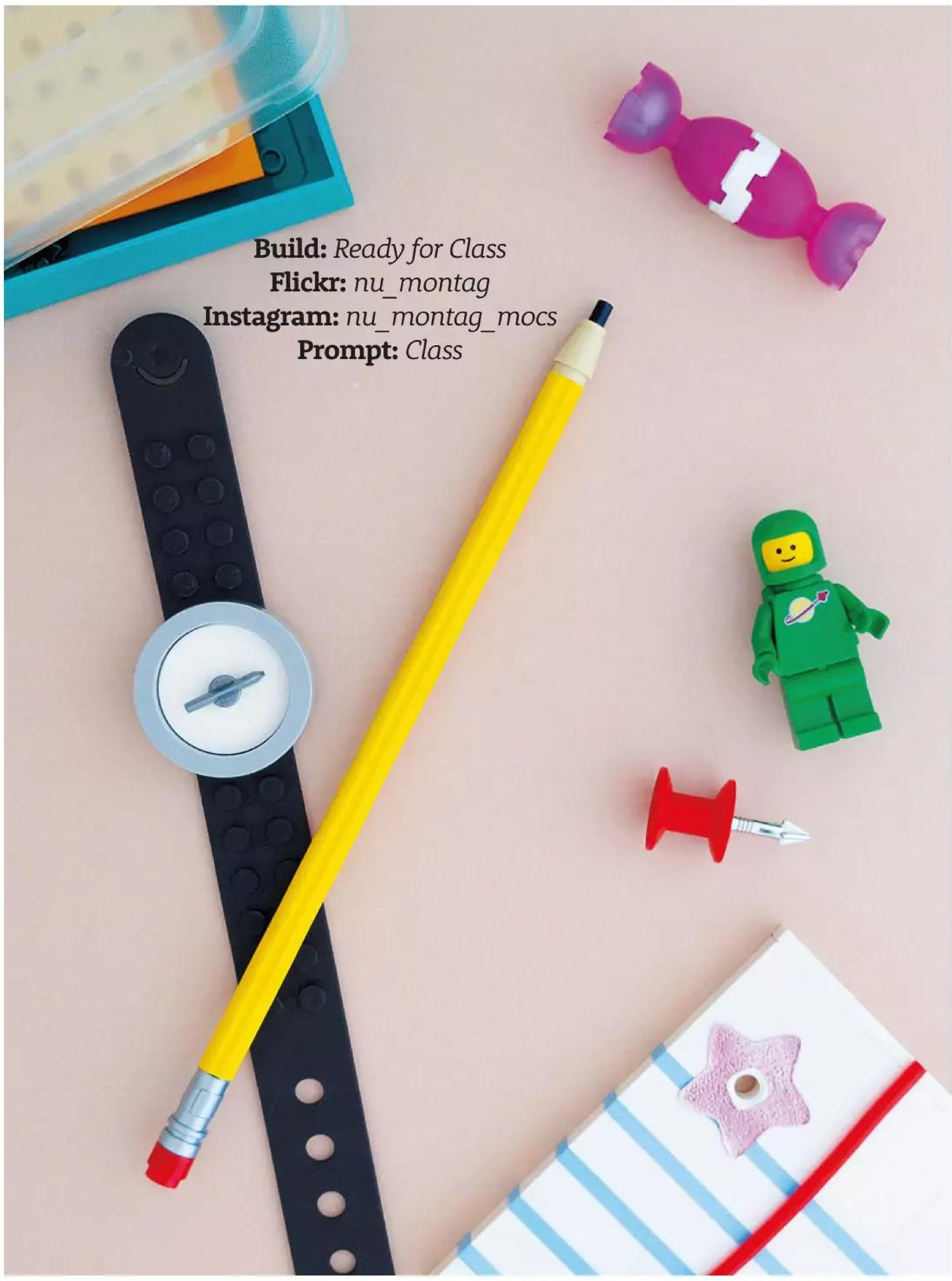

Build: *Into the Dusk*
Builder: *Elias Hübner*
Instagram: *brickleas*
Prompt: *Twilight*



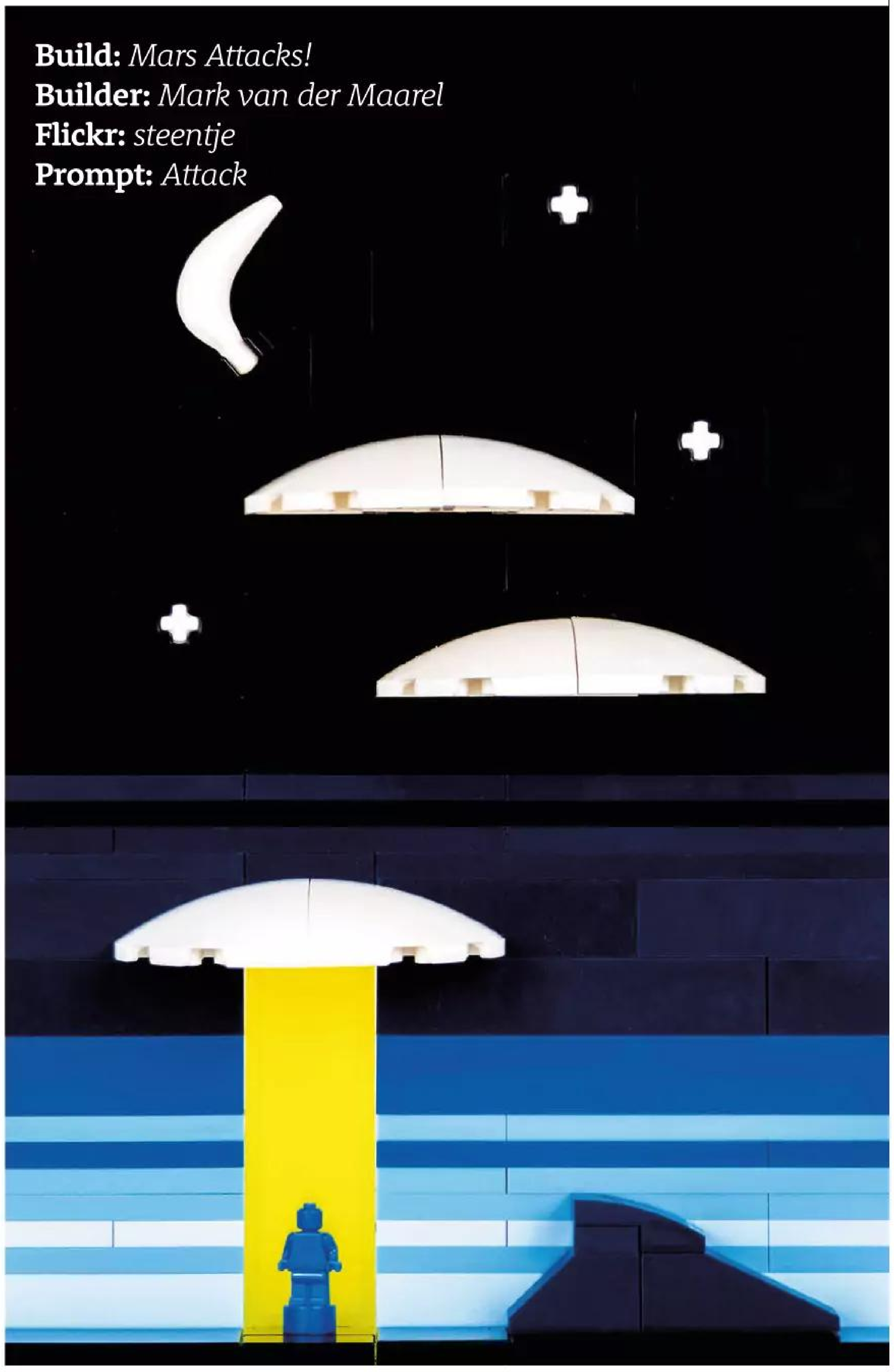
Build: *A(t)tack!*
Builder: *Dominique Boeynaems*
Instagram: *thirdfretcapo*
Prompt: *Attack*



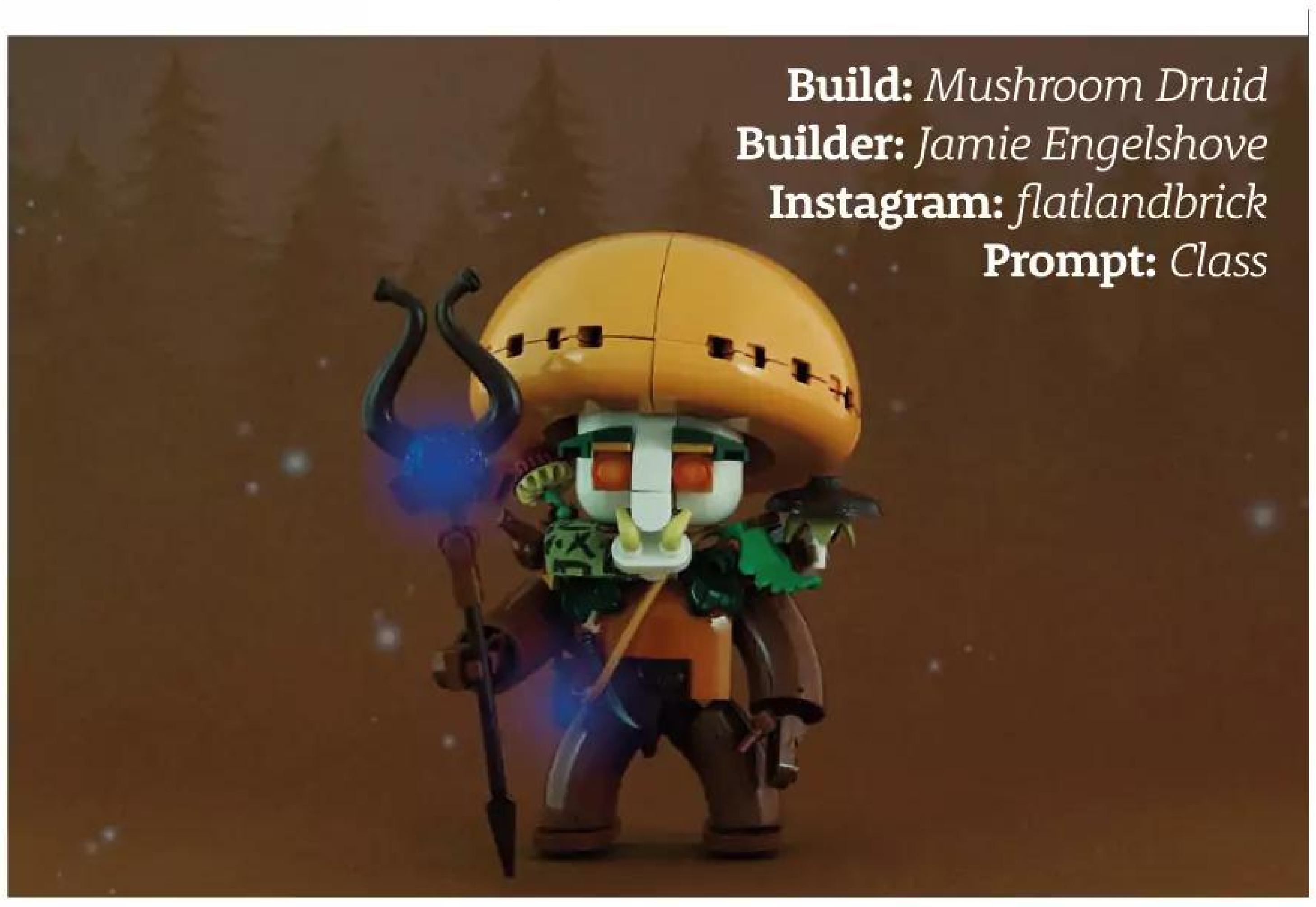
Build: *Book Mage*
Builder: *Marc*
Instagram: *syrdarian_*
Prompt: *Class*



Build: *Ready for Class*
Flickr: *nu_montag*
Instagram: *nu_montag_mocs*
Prompt: *Class*



Build: *Mars Attacks!*
Builder: *Mark van der Maarel*
Flickr: *steentje*
Prompt: *Attack*



Build: *Mushroom Druid*
Builder: *Jamie Engelshove*
Instagram: *flatlandbrick*
Prompt: *Class*

The Brick Debate

Are there too many licensed sets in LEGO Ideas?

Ryan says…

"It helps that a lot of unlicensed Ideas sets align with my love of fantasy."

LEGO Ideas, or CUUSOO as it was once called, has always been inclined towards licensed products — the first six sets from the theme were all based on existing intellectual properties (IPs) of some sort, including the likes of 21102 Minecraft Micro World. It wasn't until the seventh set rolled around that we had a taste of what unlicensed creativity could look like – and 21109 Exo Suit did not disappoint, sending fans into a frenzy upon its release, my ten-year-old self included. I credit it as the set that got me hooked on LEGO Ideas. Sure, Minecraft Micro World is cool, but had you seen the Exo Suit?

At the time of writing, 64 LEGO Ideas sets have hit shelves. Of that total, 36 of them are based on an existing IPs, whether it's a film or real-life spaceship. That leaves 28 sets for the unlicensed total. As per usual, I find myself on the side of unlicensed sets, wishing there were more, despite primarily being a Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings collector myself. So why are unlicensed Ideas sets so much more appealing to me?

After a great deal of exaggerated soul searching, I believe it comes down to the current composition of the LEGO catalogue. Original sets obviously still exist, but when it comes to new themes and new LEGO Icons sets, we're much more likely to see Transformers, Pac Man, Pokémon or ONE PIECE pop up than something like 21318 Tree House – one of my favourite LEGO sets, Ideas or otherwise.

So I always appreciate when Ideas goes down the unlicensed road. Sets like 21353 The Botanical Garden or 21343 Viking Village just have an extra bit of magic to them, being fully original concepts that 10,000 people were inspired to support becoming official sets. Not to mention that they're just plain cool; builders could let their brick imaginations run truly wild when designing them, not being constrained to an outside IP. It also helps that a lot of original Ideas sets align with my love of fantasy and adventure stories — I'm looking at you, 21325 Medieval Blacksmith.

I don't hold any grudges against licensed Ideas sets — they made it through for the same reason as the unlicensed ones did — but I do think taking a break from the rush of licensed Ideas sets, even just for a review period or two, would help more completely original ideas shine.

RYAN EVERLETH

Kat says…

"It is the perfect platform for niche fandoms that don't have the following behind them that Star Wars and Marvel do."

LEGO Ideas always produces an incredibly diverse range of sets that represent the unlimited imagination of the fans submitting projects to the platform. There's no predicting what will come next within the theme as the final round of voting always has so many different models of varying complexity and size. As LEGO Ideas has expanded, so too have the number of fandoms represented – and I don't think it's a problem having plenty of licensed sets within this theme.

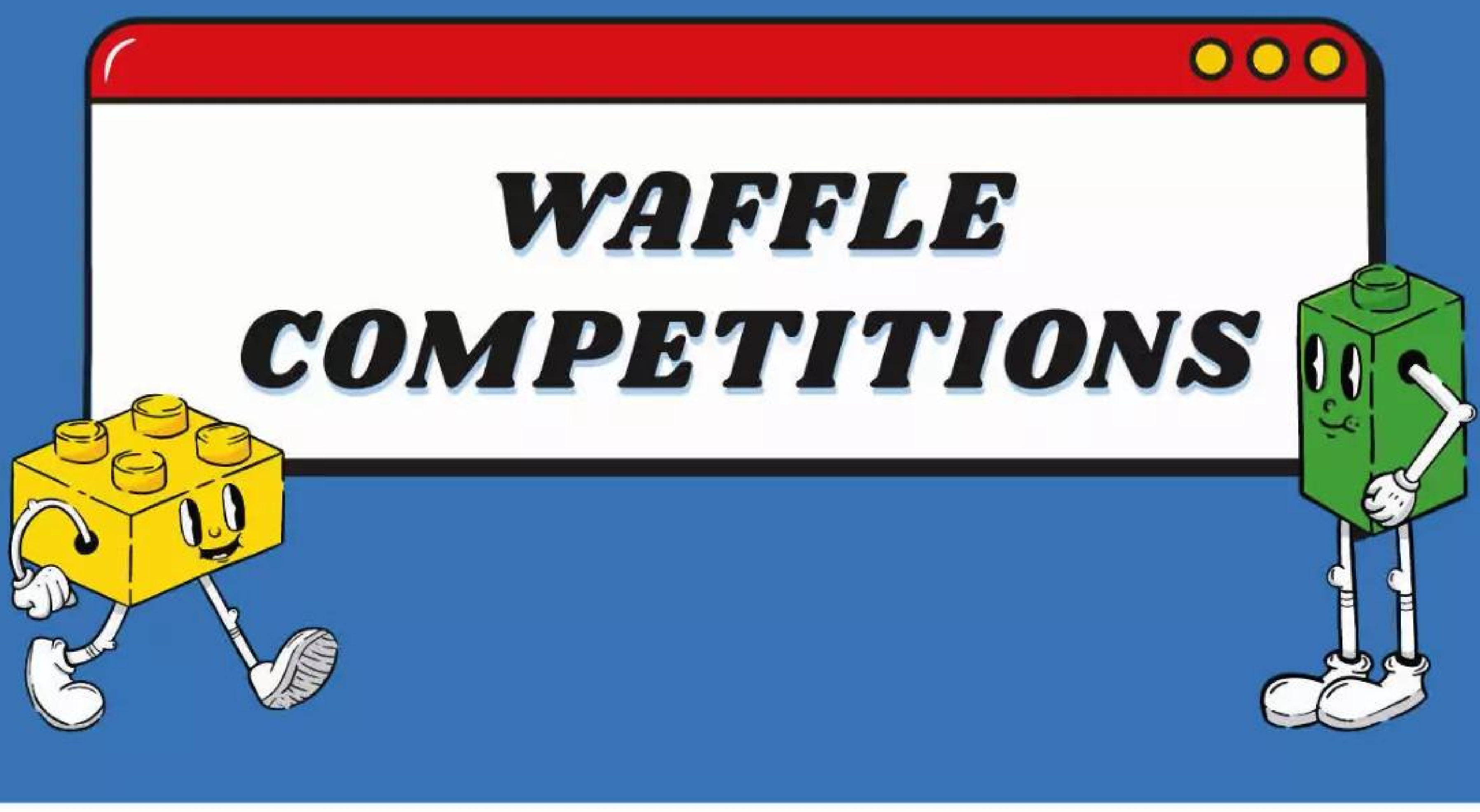
It is the perfect platform for niche fandoms. These are the licenses that don't have the following behind them that Star Wars, Marvel and other juggernauts do, but still have a smaller, dedicated fanbases who would clamour for a LEGO set. While these IPs may not have enough material or popularity to warrant a full wave of sets, they can be represented in a single LEGO Ideas model. It still symbolises the imagination of a passionate fan designer – just for a certain property that requires a license.

One of the main reasons I don't think there can ever be too many licensed sets within this theme is because it will always bring someone new to the world of the brick. Someone may not have had any interest in LEGO sets before but as soon as they see their favourite band or movie as a set, they're going to want to buy it. Were any K-Pop fans really into LEGO building before 21339 BTS Dynamite was released?

There is also a question of how much you notice a licensed product, because it's not just recreations of iconic movies and music videos – both 21344 The Orient Express and 21345 Polaroid OneStep XS-70 Camera needed a partnership for the logo branding. While there have certainly been more licensed LEGO Ideas sets recently, they are always alongside original creations and I think the theme strikes a balance.

The current mix of IP based and original concepts leaves plenty of breathing room for a variety that are not inspired by IPs. LEGO Ideas has tightened its rules over the years so that submissions based on existing licensed LEGO themes are not accepted, meaning that only completely new ones can potentially become future sets. It keeps LEGO Ideas a fair and fun platform that celebrates fan creativity in whatever shape it forms.

KAT REES-JAUKE



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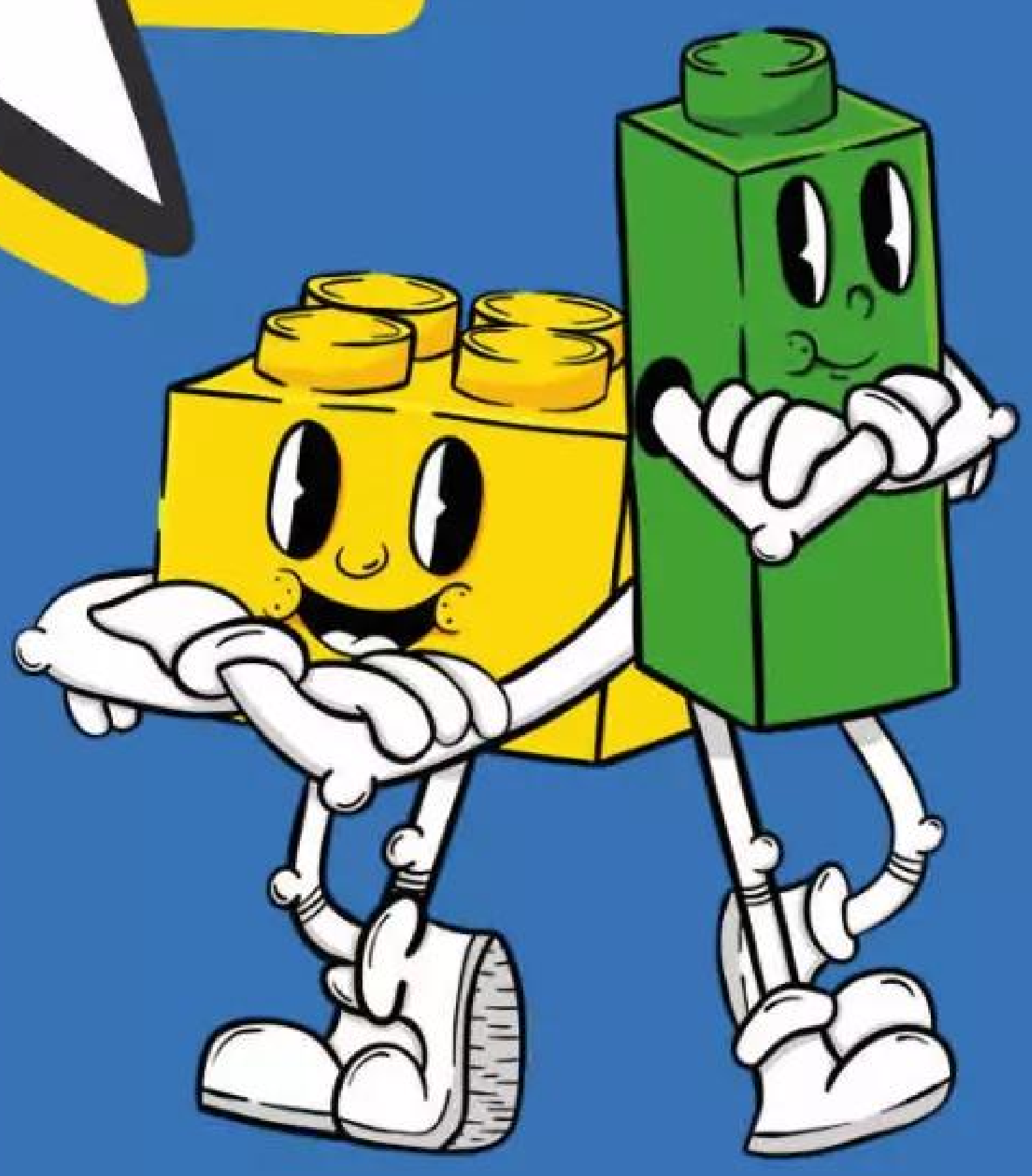

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What's new at bricklink

What is BDP?

BrickLink Designer Program is a way for fans to turn their builds into official LEGO sets. Each year, 15 fan-designed models will be available to preorder as part of a very limited production run. Sets are limited to 30,000 copies per design.

BRICKLINK CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF COMMUNITY

The LEGO Group's subsidiary has grown significantly since it was founded in 2000 and is celebrating accordingly

Way back in the summer of 2000, LEGO fan and entrepreneur Dan Jezek launched BrickLink as a way for fellow lovers of the brick to connect across a shared marketplace. It was a much-needed place for LEGO devotees to buy and sell minifigures, sets and individual pieces in an era when internet access had only recently become common in western households.

During his teenage years Dan would often buy LEGO elements in bulk from garage sales to then sort and sell on eBay. With a degree in computer programming and experience with website design, he felt that there was a niche to be explored, so BrickLink (or BrickBay as it was named initially) launched.

It was an immediate success with like-minded LEGO fans and within a year transactions soared from $170,000 to nearly $900,000. While Dan Jezek sadly didn't live to see the transformations that BrickLink would undergo, his legacy lives on as the platform continues to expand.

The company was led for seven years by Jung-Ju 'Jay' Kim and Korean company NXMH, before being acquired by the LEGO Group in 2019. While it has changed leadership, it has never changed from its initial purpose in allowing fans to buy and sell bricks. The platform now has more than one million members, hosting more than 10,000 stores from 70 countries.

Since being acquired by Jay, the company has added new products and services beyond Marketplace. Studio is digital building software that allows fans to build with an unlimited brick palette, while BrickLink Designer Program gives fans a chance at having their builds released as official LEGO products.

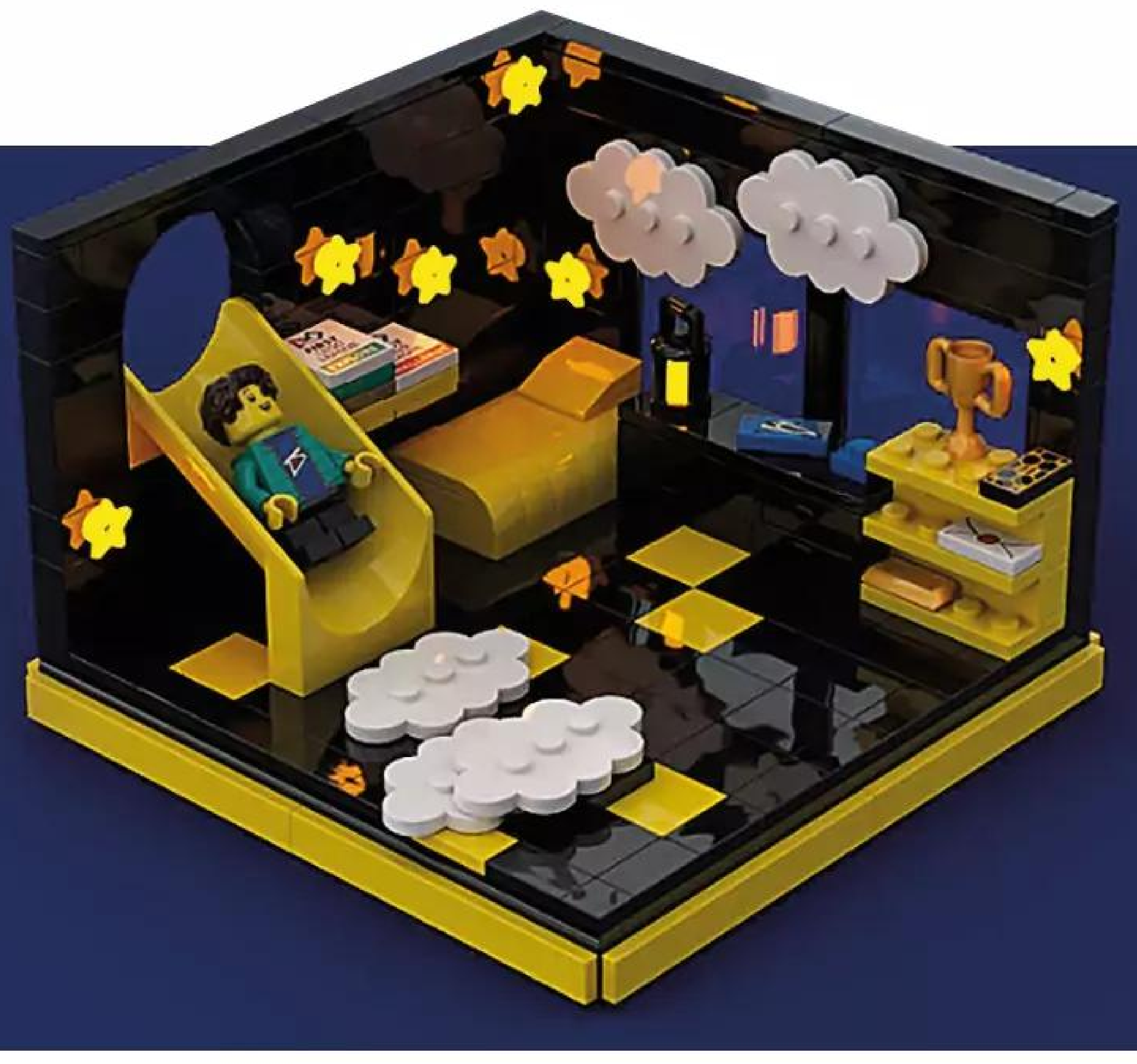
To celebrate this milestone, a special edition badge has been created that appears on the 2025 BrickLink Designer Program set boxes. It features a classic LEGO parrot in a party hat. This is a homage to the original logo of the website, which included parrots piece, blue elements and green elements.

BrickLink team members will be at multiple LEGO fan conventions throughout the year, including Skærbæk Fan Weekend in Denmark. Fans can also get involved with the celebrations online as BrickLink will soon unveil the winners of recent Studio activities – those models will decorate the enormous brick-built BrickLink birthday cake.

Other interactive opportunities include participating in a mystery mosaic and testing your knowledge with BrickLink quizzes. New monthly challenges will continue to provide build prompts for fans to get involved with.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Build Spotlight



velina.borovska captures the joy of childhood imagination in a room that's straight out of a dream. Sparkling stars decorate the walls, while clouds evoke a sense of daydreaming. Rather than a door, you enter via a slide and there's even a little night light by the bed. Best of all though is the colour scheme that mimics Blacktron.

Important dates

October 2025
Series 5 sets start shipping

October 6, 2025
Series 6 sets open for preorder

February 1, 2026
Series 7 sets open for preorder

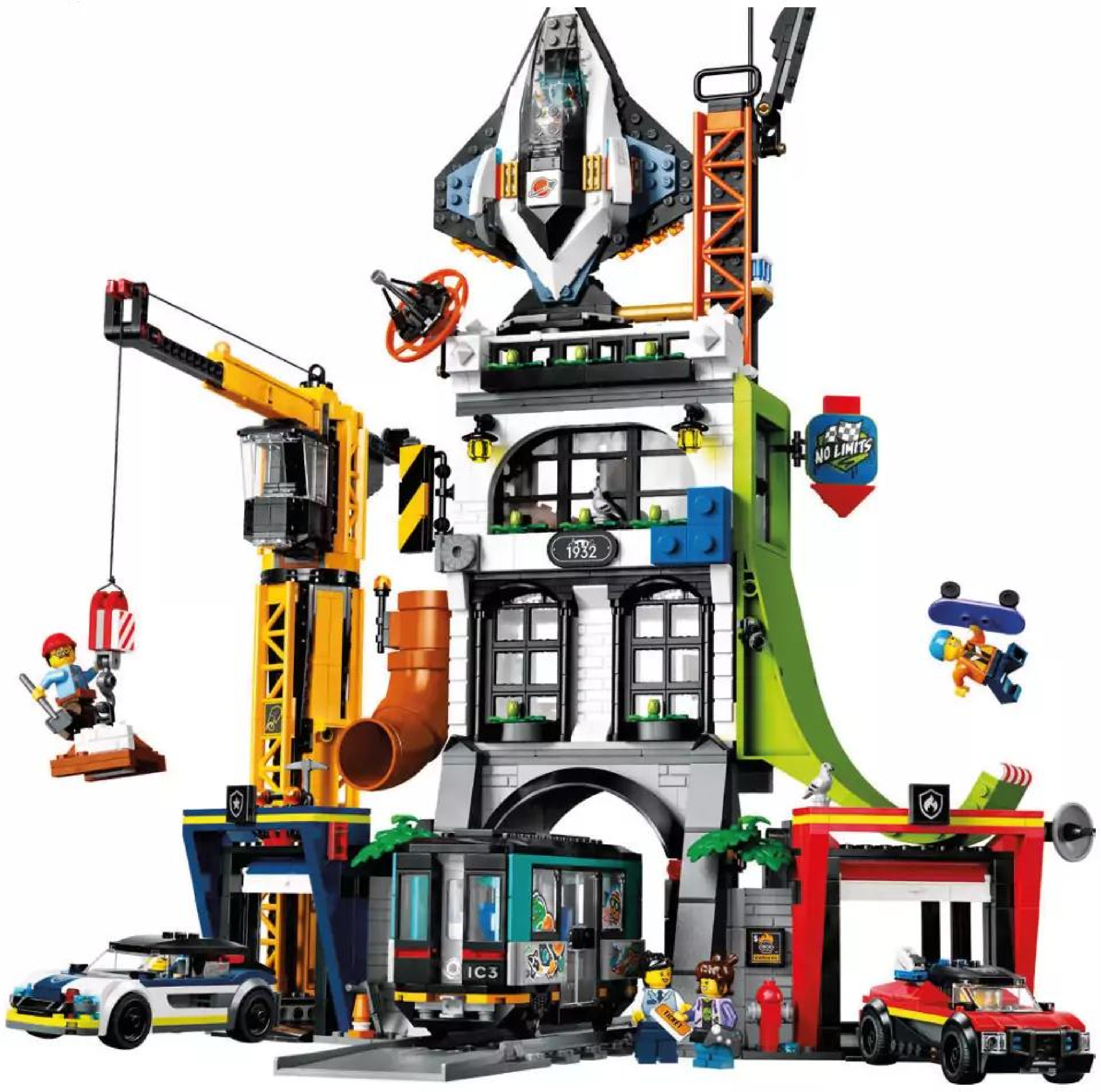
March 2026
Series 6 sets start shipping

June 2026
Series 8 sets open for preorder

July 2026
Series 7 sets start shipping

ALL OF THE CITY IN A SINGLE SET

LEGO City goes for broke with its newest flagship set, combining all of the theme's icons in just one model



The most arresting set in LEGO City's summer 2025 lineup is 60473 The City Tower, which seems determined to pack as much of theme as it can into its 1,941 pieces. Nearly every regular LEGO City subtheme is present in the set – Police and Fire get mini stations, Construction has a crane, Sports gets a skate ramp, Trains has a subway carriage and Space crowns the top with a launchpad and ship.

The core building that's hidden under everything appears to be similar in general style to 10251 Brick Bank, though simplified for the set's younger audience. The building stands three storeys tall, albeit with the ground floor cannibalised by a tunnel for the subway.

One subway carriage is included, which does limit capacity for the system, but since the set only has seven minifigures, it's not an area of concern. Police and Fire also get one car each, and the skater guy gets his own set of wheels to perform some incredibly risky tricks two storeys up. The spaceship is the last of the many modes of transportation in the set and serves as the focal point that represents the set's wacky style.

Although the set ties into LEGO City No Limits, the animated series that the theme inspired, it seems like more than a coincidence that it is launching to coincide with the 20th anniversary of City.

RYAN EVERLETH

Ryan's take

"It's not intended to be a tower for a realistic city. It's The LEGO City Tower."

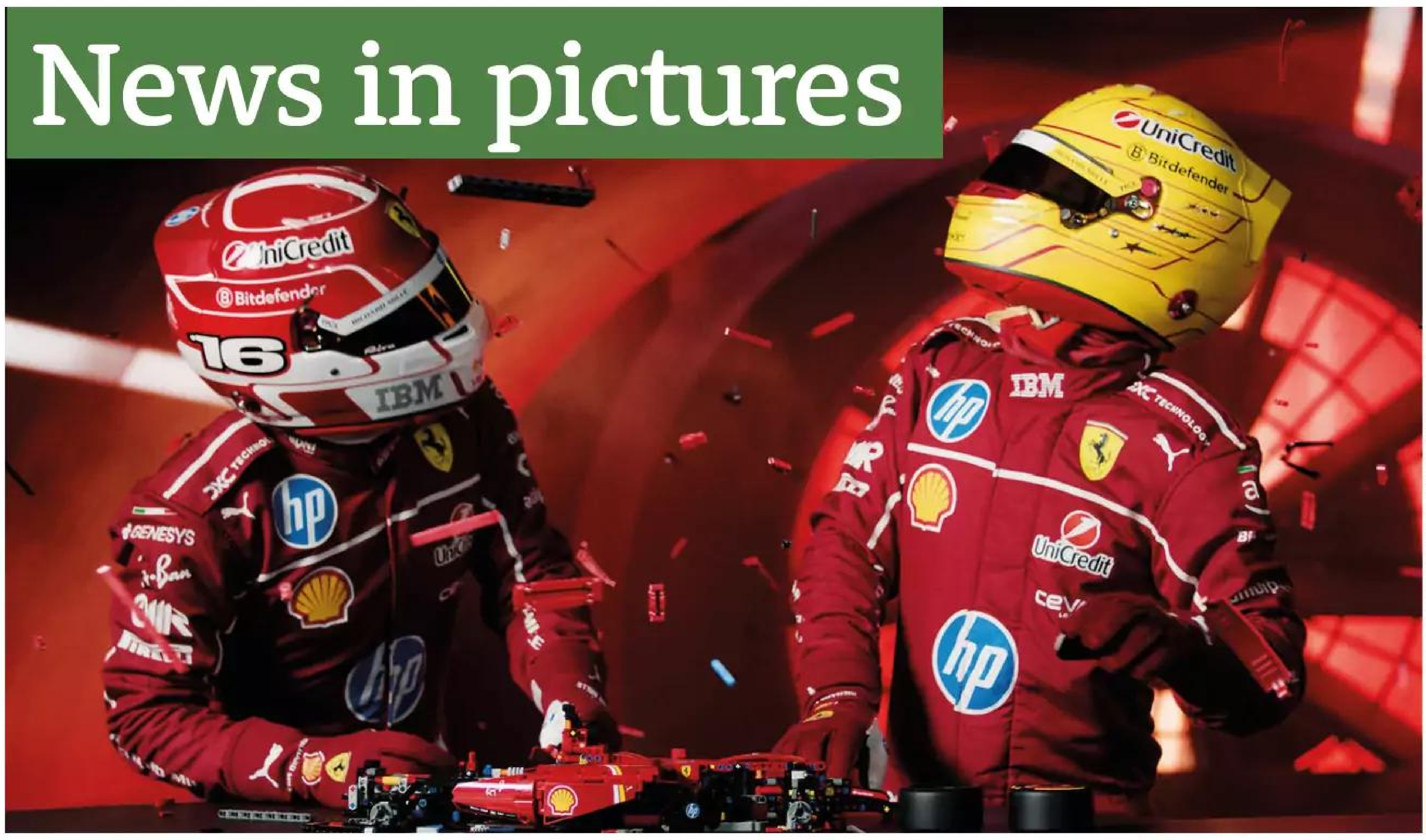
LEGO City is no stranger to subthemes that stretch the boundaries of what can be considered 'city.' Jungles, volcanoes, and the Arctic aren't exactly city things in the way the coffee shop around the corner is. But usually these subthemes are exactly that — subthemes, separate from the more typical city fare. That is not the case with 60473 The City Tower, which proudly displays a spaceship atop a skyscraper with a two-storey skate ramp on its side.

The absolutely wild mashup makes it easy at first to write off, and I must admit I was leaning in that direction. Why does anyone need a building that's more an amalgamation of random side builds than an actual, cohesive building?

But as I've sat looking at The City Tower for longer, I've come to appreciate its goofy nonsense. It's a wacky representation of all things LEGO City — mixing Police, Fire, Construction, Trains and, yes, even Space. It's not intended to be a tower for a realistic city. It's The LEGO City Tower, a set that's not afraid to be it's authentic, bizarre self and pack in as much of the theme as it can into one not-so-neat package.

As sacrilegious as it feels to say this as an adult fan, I like 60473 The City Tower. It will never fit nicely alongside its modular building cousins, but I don't think it should to. It feels right at home with all of the other sets in a City theme that's growing increasingly allergic to simple city-themed sets. So is The City Tower the greatest thing since the minifigure? No. It is a beautifully chaotic model and a great reminder that sometimes the more whimsical sets have just as much value as the hardcore 18+ ones.

News in pictures

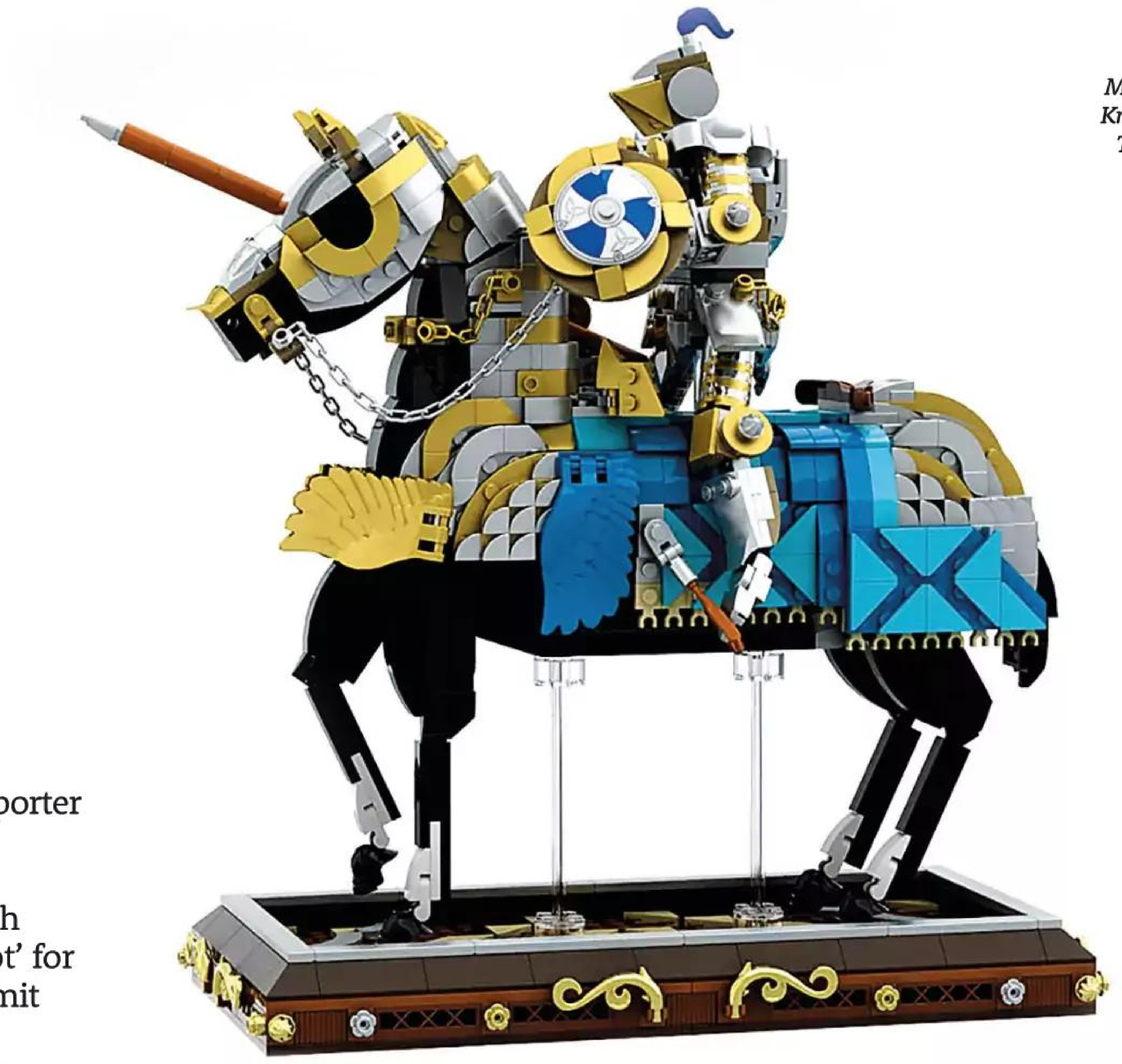


Left: *F1 drivers Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc attempted to build 42207 Ferrari SF-24 F1 Car... while in an active wind tunnel. Safe to say, it was a bit trickier than it is to build the set on the living room table.*

Below: *Netflix teased the upcoming LEGO One Piece theme with a life size LEGO Gum-Gum Fruit. LEGO One Piece sets are expected to release later this year.*

57 BUILDS REACH THE FINAL TEST

The first 2025 LEGO Ideas review is a crowded affair, with a huge slate of projects reaching 10,000 votes


Medieval Knight by Truman Cheng.

A grand total of 57 fan builds have reached the 10,000 supporter milestone between January and May 5, 2025, so they are now in the first 2025 LEGO Ideas review. If trends from previous reviews hold true, two projects could be approved, with the possibility of a few making their way to the new 'Parking Lot' for further evaluation. Any projects not selected will have to resubmit and try for 10,000 supporters all over again.

Among the 57 models are a handful that regular Blocks readers will recognise. Iyan Ha's The Old Man and the Sea, Bricked1980's Paddington Bear and TheGlobeGuy's Mary Poppins, Back to Cherry Tree Lane have all featured in the magazine and will each now have their chance to become official LEGO sets.

Just these three models are all immensely different from each other and highlight how difficult it can be to choose just one or two from each review, as it is a challenge to pick the 'better' model when comparing a British street to a fantastical book and marmalade-eating bear.

Of the other projects, there's some surprising overlap. The iconic world of Steven Spielberg's E.T. is tackled by both KoalaBrick and Lafabrick — the former recreates the famous scene of flying in front of the moon while the latter is a sculpture of the lovable alien. Ancient Rome also gets two chances for its first minifigure-scale set, with EarlMagicalEel proposing the grand Ancient Roman Temple and Junglescream betting on the Roman Bath instead. Both are similar in general aesthetics, though the Temple leans more into the colourful, painted interpretation of Roman design while the Baths present the stark white of faded marble.

Modular buildings and sitcom rooms are of course a constant presence on the platform and make up a good deal of the remaining projects. But a few more unique concepts have made it in, too: Leoardi's Love Enlighten Me is a moving sculpture of two lampposts cuddling as best they can on a park bench and Micdud's Ramen is a very appetizing model.

Results of this review will follow the announcement of the third 2024 review results later this year, giving the LEGO Ideas team plenty of time to weigh each project and determine will come next from the theme. While fans' role in the process is over for this round, product ideas are now gathering support for the next round.

RYAN EVERLETH

Winning build

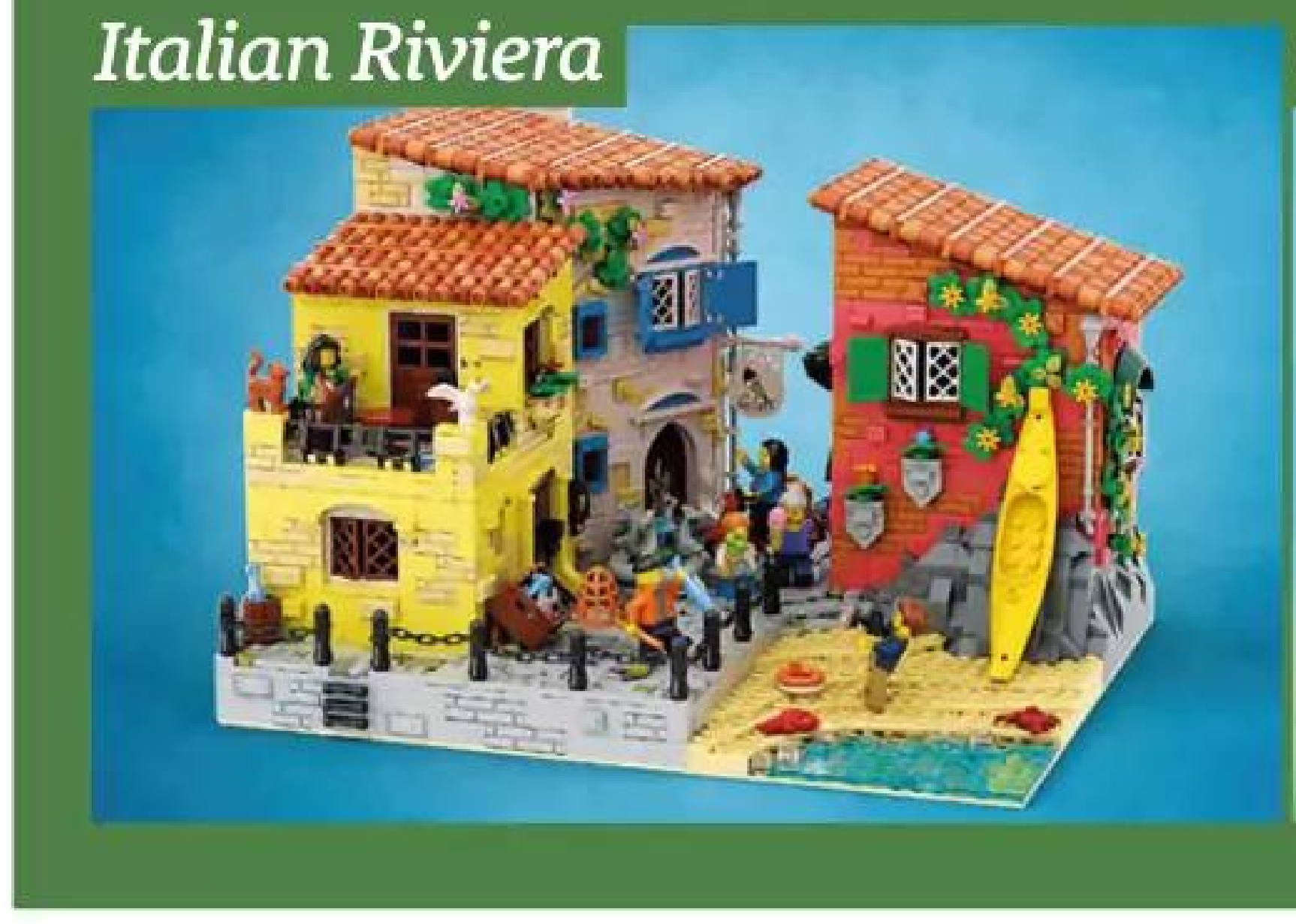
The Build Your Brick Story challenge has chosen its winner, with Dietje's Who's Connected? taking the top prize. Builders were tasked with telling a story via LEGO bricks in any genre, with any style — it was all up to the builders to share what they wanted to tell. And from the great variety of stories, Who's Connected? won out. The build explores the grey, zoned-out world of screen addiction and contrasts it with minifigures who put down the screens and choose to live in the colourful moment.

Gathering support

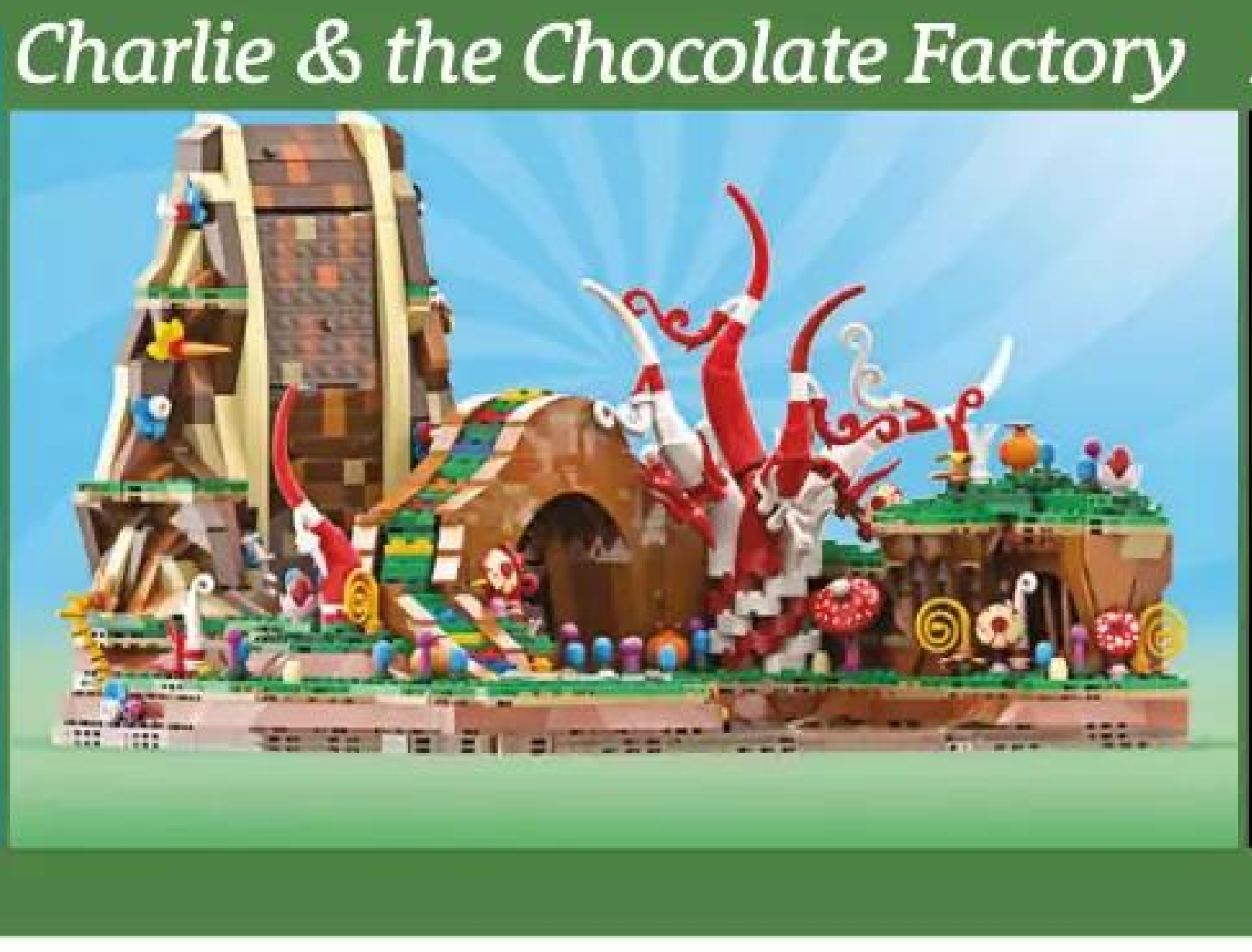
Mitsuru Nikaido's Manta Ray Mech takes an iconic creature of the sea and adds a sci-fi twist. While the animal might look natural at first glance, it's actually a robotic recreation, imagining a futuristic world where AI has developed mechanical replicas of real animals that can't survive in an increasingly hostile environment.

In the pipeline

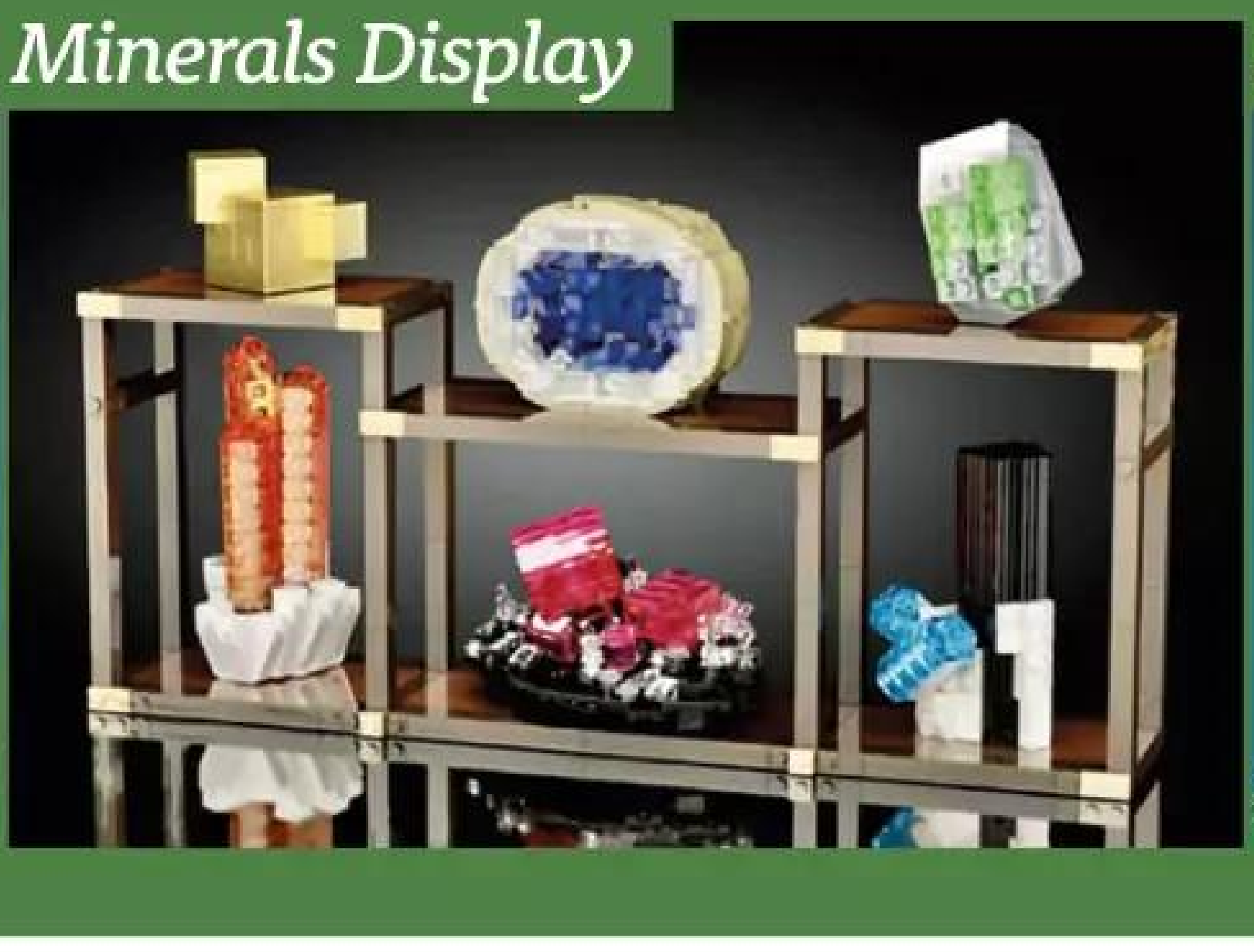
Italian Riviera



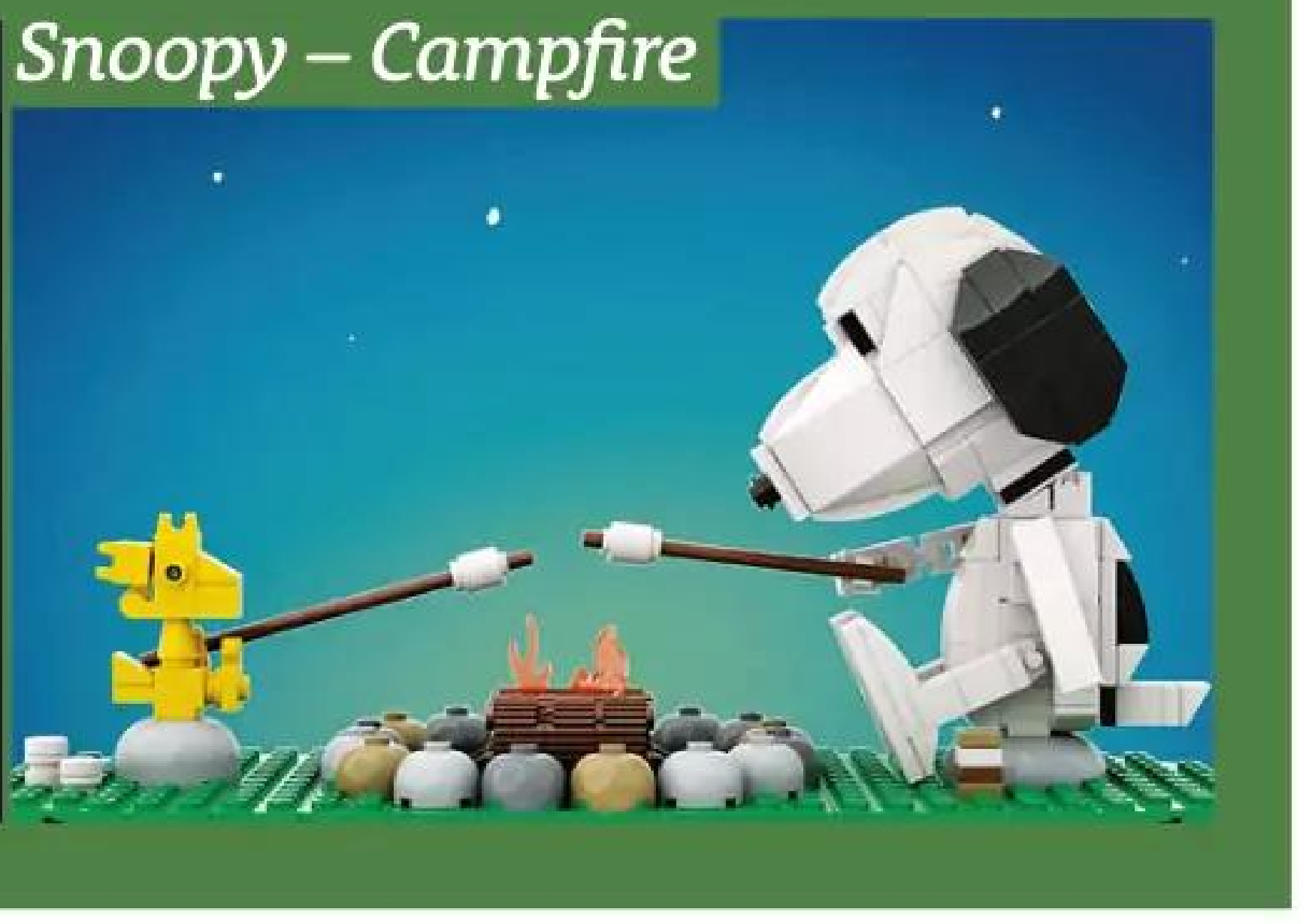
Charlie & the Chocolate Factory



Minerals Display



Snoopy – Campfire

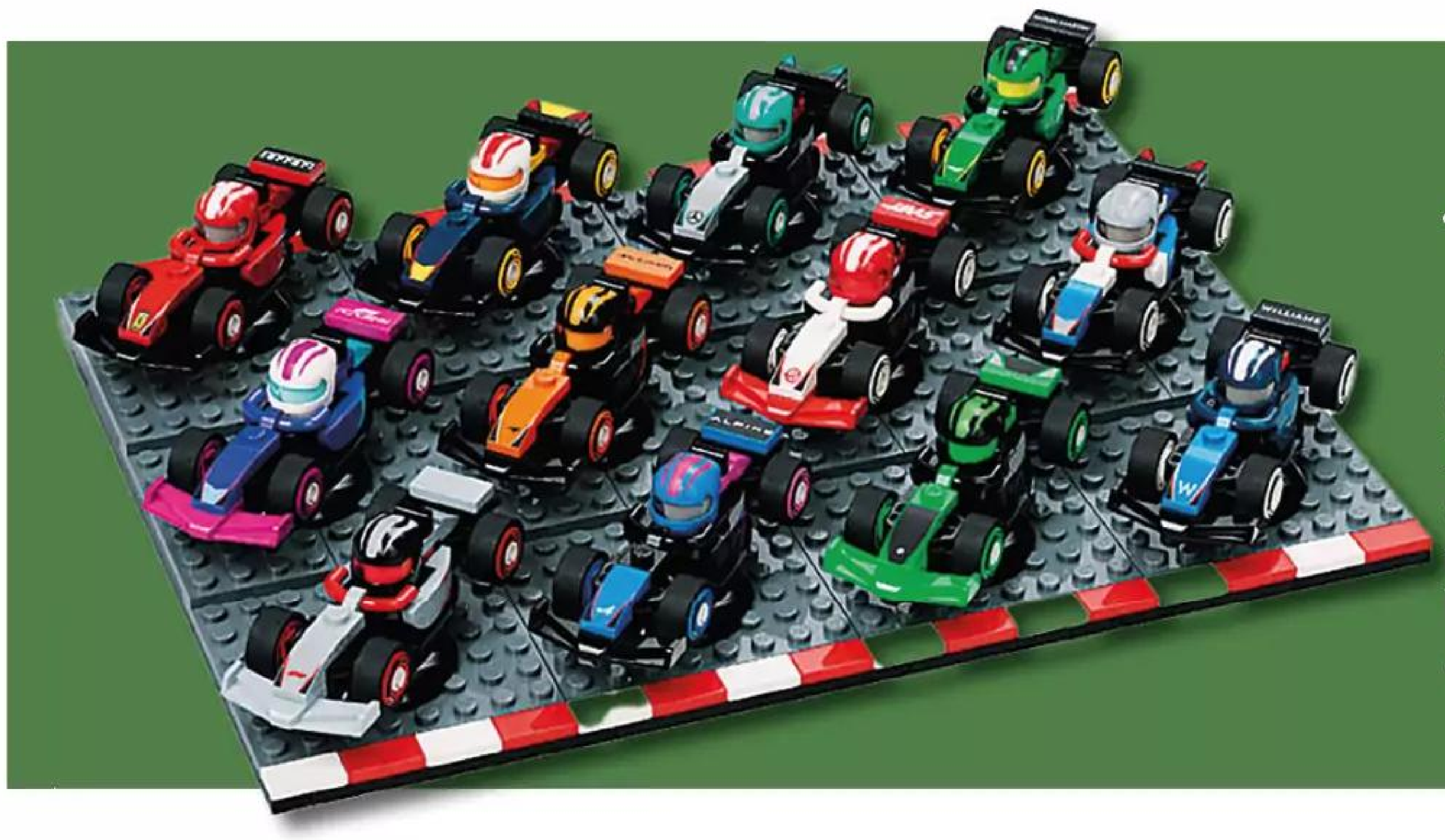


In other news...

Rounding up the rest of the month's news from the world of LEGO bricks

BOSTON'S IN BUSINESS

The LEGO Group has cut the ribbon and officially opened its new US headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts. Situated in Boston's Back Bay, the headquarters covers more than 157,000 square feet and will employ over 800 people. "The Boston Hub will open up new ways for LEGO colleagues to create, connect and grow as we continue our mission to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow across the US," said LEGO Group CEO Niels B. Christiansen. The company is starting off strong, donating $1 million to the Boston Public Library, the first step in a two-year, $5 million philanthropic commitment to Boston.



A STYLISH DISPLAY

71049 F1 Collectible Race Cars takes the Collectible Minifigures formula and applies it to brick-built F1 cars. Seemingly to acknowledge the different style of blind box series, the LEGO Group has offered instructions for a 149-piece Car Display Stand. The tiered display holds all 12 cars from the series and can be built if you order a prepared selection of elements from the LEGO Pick a Brick service. It's about as simple as such a design could be, using just 13 different parts, but it's a nice bonus for fans of the series, as the cars don't come with display stands.

VIRGINIA GEARS UP FOR 2027

A new North American factory is already under construction in Greater Richmond, Virginia, but the LEGO Group isn't stopping there. A $366 million, 2,000,000-square-foot regional distribution centre (RDC) has been announced and will begin construction in Prince George, Virginia later in 2025. The RDC is planned to open alongside the factory in 2027 and will be the second RDC in the Americas, joining the existing facility in Texas. "The regional distribution centre will bring greater flexibility to our network, ensuring we are well positioned to support long-term growth in the Americas," said LEGO Chief Operations Officer Carsten Rasmussen.

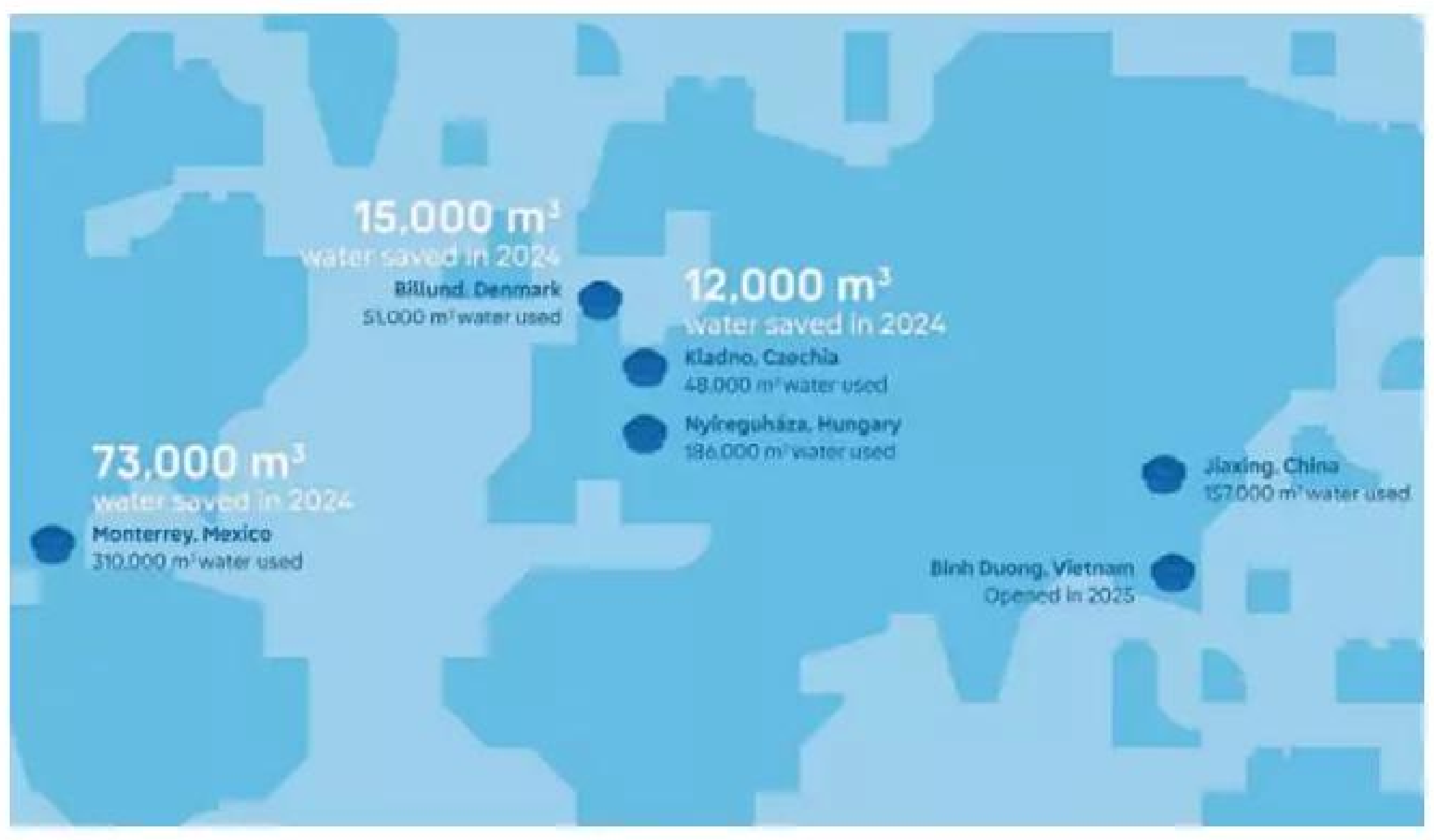
LEGO ISLAND CODE RECOVERED

Released in 1997, LEGO Island has become more than sufficiently outdated in terms of its code. That led MattKC to assemble a team with the goal of reverse engineering the 1s and 0s behind the game. The work that followed is a bit more complicated than just grabbing a brick separator — the team utilised custom tools to run byte checks on the code. Struggles ensued when dealing with wonky behaviours from the coding language and the convoluted ways the game dealt with graphics, but the team has satisfactorily completed the reverse engineering and can now begin building a modern version of the game.

SUSTAINABLE WATER SOLUTIONS

A commitment to sustainability includes more than just energy efficiency — the LEGO Group is also reducing its water consumption across all its factories via increased efficiency, alternative practices and treatment facilities. These efforts are taking place around the globe – a water treatment facility has been installed by the Mexico factory; a shallow ground water capture system has been implemented in Billund; and the new Vietnam factory utilises an air-cooling system rather than a water-based one. Thanks to these efforts, water consumption has decreased each year for the last three years, with a reduction of 56,000 m3 from 2023 to 2024.

RYAN EVERLETH



Q&A

HISTORY THROUGH BRICKS

Andrew Redfern is crowdfunding Minifigure Monarchs, a book exploring the past through the medium of LEGO bricks

Left: Some of Andrew's scenes feature custom elements and unofficial pieces.

Below: The First Battle of St. Albans.

As a result of his keen interest in history, Andrew Redfern is working on an entire book about kings and queens, looking at history through the lens of the monarchy. He is putting a unique spin on the subject matter though, with each period of history depicted through intricate LEGO models with carefully considered – and sometimes customised – minifigures.

Blocks: Where does your interest in history come from?

Andrew: I have always loved history, but during lockdown I started reading up on periods I am less familiar with and listening to history podcasts. Growing up I loved anything with knights and castles, so naturally the period I am most fascinated by is medieval history such as The Wars of the Roses. My favourite LEGO theme is Castle.

How are the LEGO builds and the historical content complementary?

The combination is very popular. That is evident through the MOCs people share on social media and exhibit at LEGO conventions. History is a story and LEGO elements are a fantastic medium for storytelling. In the book I'm trying to capture moments in time and modern minifigures with their expressions can really capture the emotions of a moment.

The project has evolved considerably – some of my builds for the early kings are quite basic, but as time has passed I've tried more ambitious builds, spent more time customising the minifigures and added more content to the book. My hobby has allowed me to connect with some great people who share my passion for LEGO building and history. Some have even agreed to let me use their wonderful creations in the book, for which I am hugely grateful.

I've not shied away from difficult concepts in the book such as slavery, the Holocaust and the British Empire. LEGO models can make these topics accessible without trivialising them. I've not written the book for children, but as a teacher I do hope it will help make history more accessible to a younger audience.

What was your research process like for the book?

I take a monarch at a time. The process really involves working out what the most important and interesting things are to include within a handful of pages, then deciding on the builds that will work for the situation and time periods, but more importantly, what will be fun to make and will capture the reader's imagination.

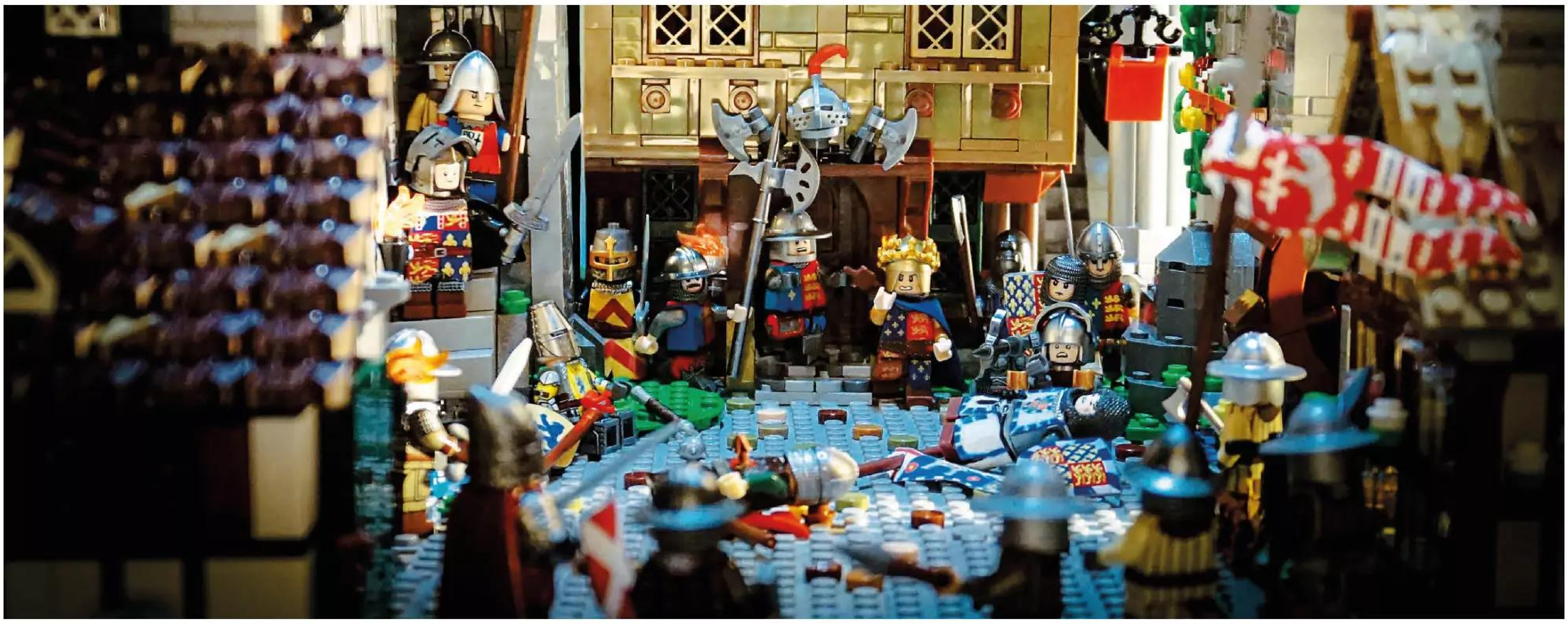
I'm normally reading books and listening to podcasts months in advance to research and plan each king or queen. This is so I have time to plan the builds, gather the pieces and where necessary customise the minifigures. Some monarchs obviously take longer than others. Henry VIII took a long time to complete with seven separate builds and George III alone covers 20 pages in the book. George III's reign covers so much, including the American Revolutionary War and the Napoleonic Wars.

What is your favourite build in the book?

That's a tough question. There are some really talented builders who are contributing to different sections of the book, but If I had to go for one of my own then I would say the First Battle of St. Albans. I choose this because there are so many custom items within the shot. Each suit of armour, shield and flag is customised to a noble family that fought in the battle. I'm also pleased with the lighting of this shot. The scene represents the fighting in the narrow streets of St. Albans during this 15th century battle.

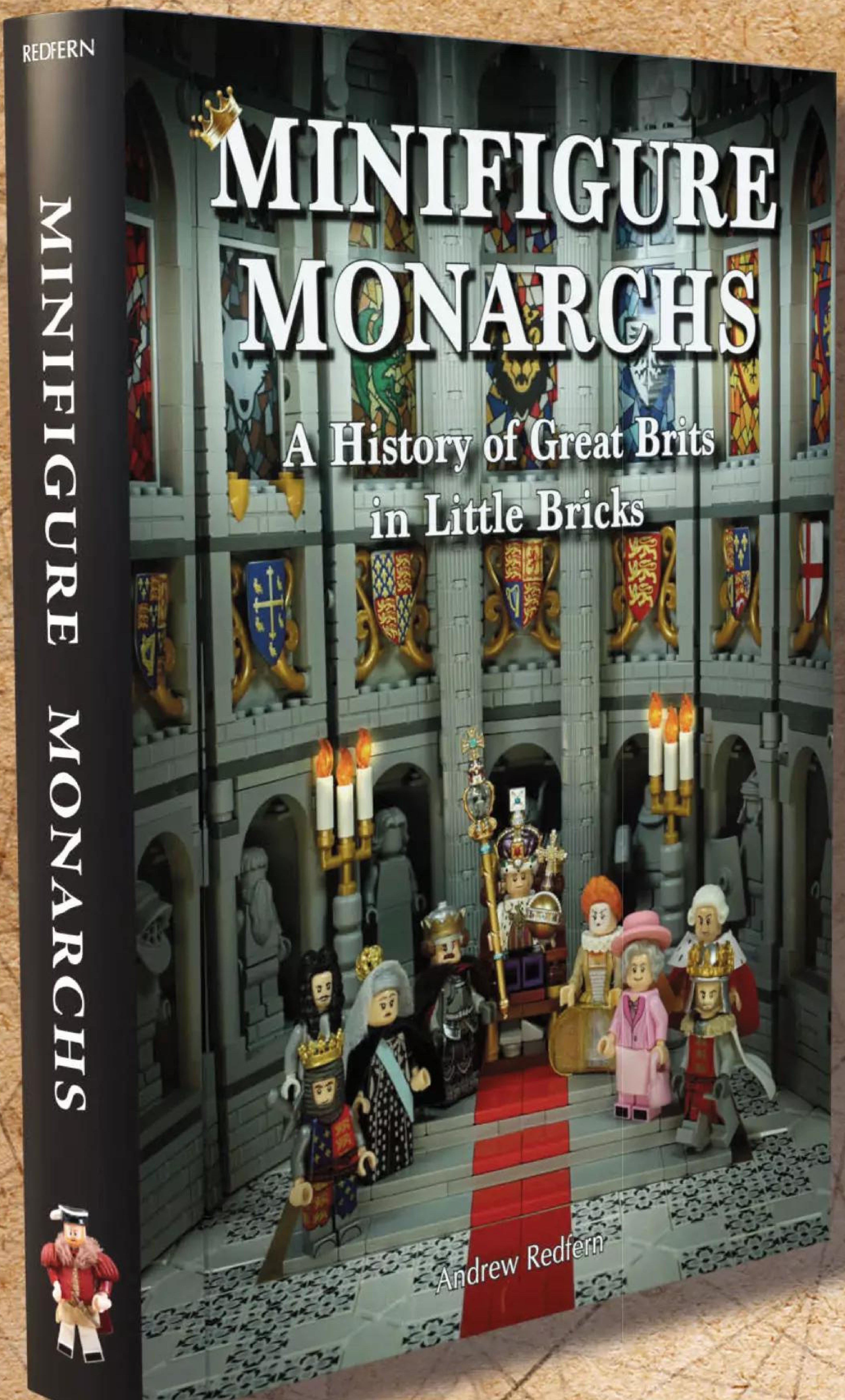
How can people get the book?

The book is being funded as a Kickstarter campaign and is available to support throughout July 2025. People can make a pledge to order their copy of the book by going to Kickstarter.com and searching for Minifigure Monarchs or scanning the QR code on the advert.



Just launched
KICKSTARTER

Connecting you to the past a history book with a difference!


REDFERN
MINIFIGURE MONARCHS
A History of Great Brits in Little Bricks
Andrew Redfern
MINIFIGURE MONARCHS

Let the Minifigure Monarchs take you on a journey through history...

Get your copy on KICKSTARTER this July

Scan the QR code or visit kickstarter.com
and search for Minifigure Monarchs

The Lost Elements

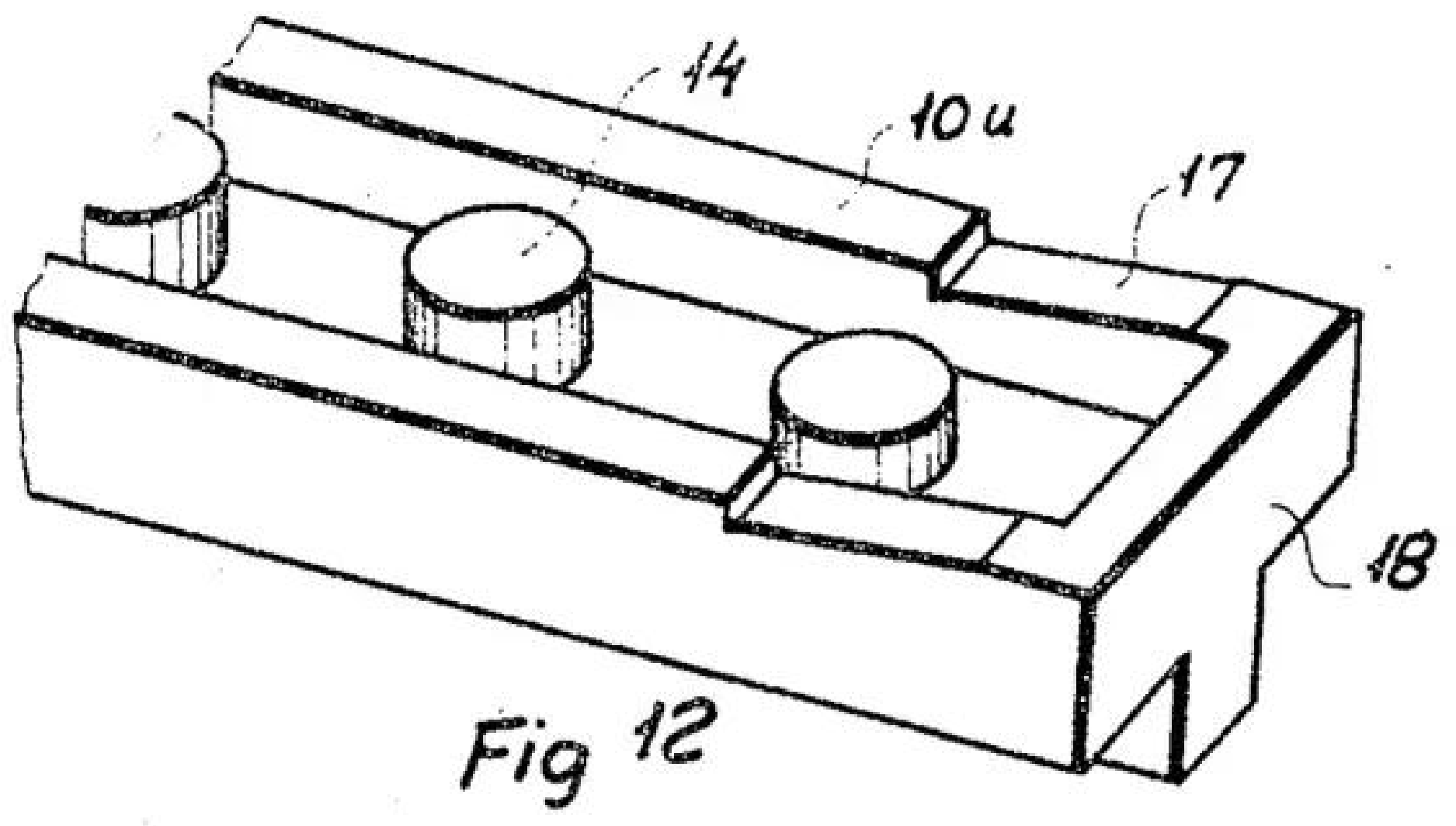
Blocks delves into the many elements and products that the LEGO Group has designed but never released

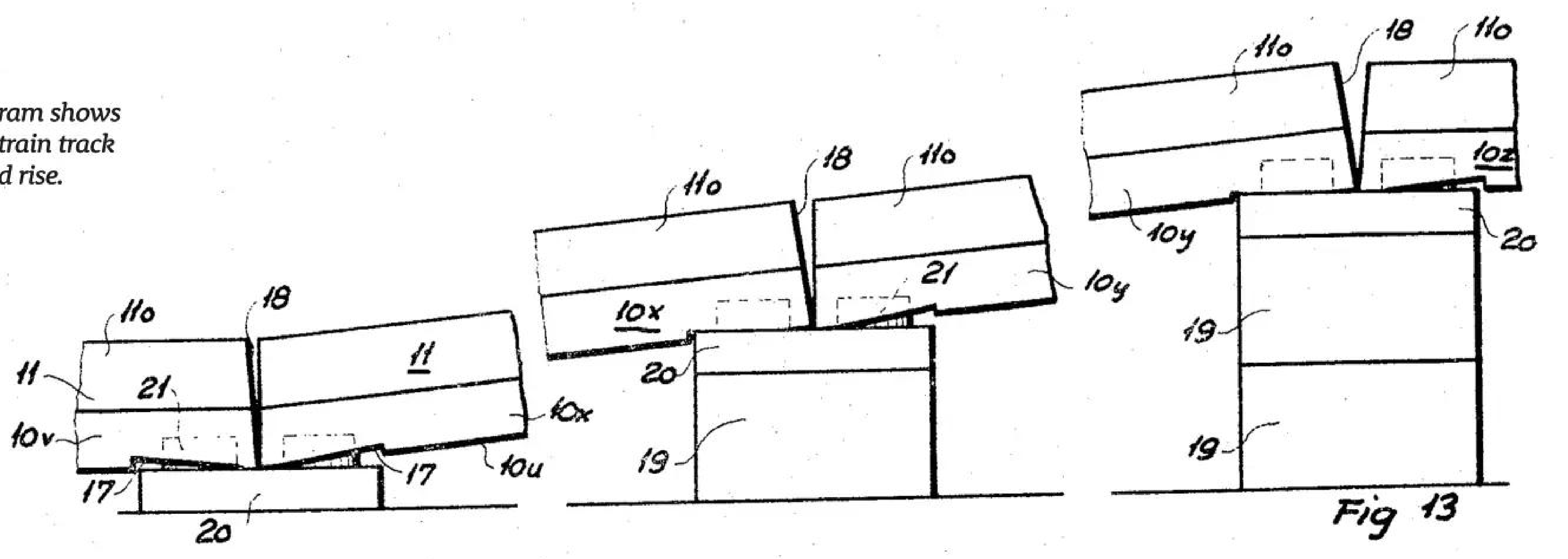
TRAIN TRACK INCLINE

There are times when a feature is crafted into LEGO elements, then never gets used in an official set. When designers were creating the first track elements, they envisioned uses in which vertical rises and falls would be incorporated into layouts and sets. In service of that vision, the end of each track element was given a small notch, and their ends were shortened slightly so that adjacent parts could connect to joining plates at angles. This resulted in track that, unlike today's track pieces, could be built at an incline.

This feature was referenced in the original train track patent filed in 1969. The notch and angle of each track part was set so that sufficient clutch power could be maintained across a vertical rise of one standard brick between each length of track. While a small portion of the stud on the connecting plate remained exposed, the gripping force was deemed strong enough for play.

While this geometry did make it to production, no official sets that included vertical rises, falls or hills were ever released. However, the possibility that such construction could exist was acknowledged, most notably in the lone Train Idea book published by the LEGO Group. A two-page spread shows an amazing loop with a vertical rise supported by Technic trestles. It's a shame that no official sets included such a layout.





This diagram shows how the train track could rise.

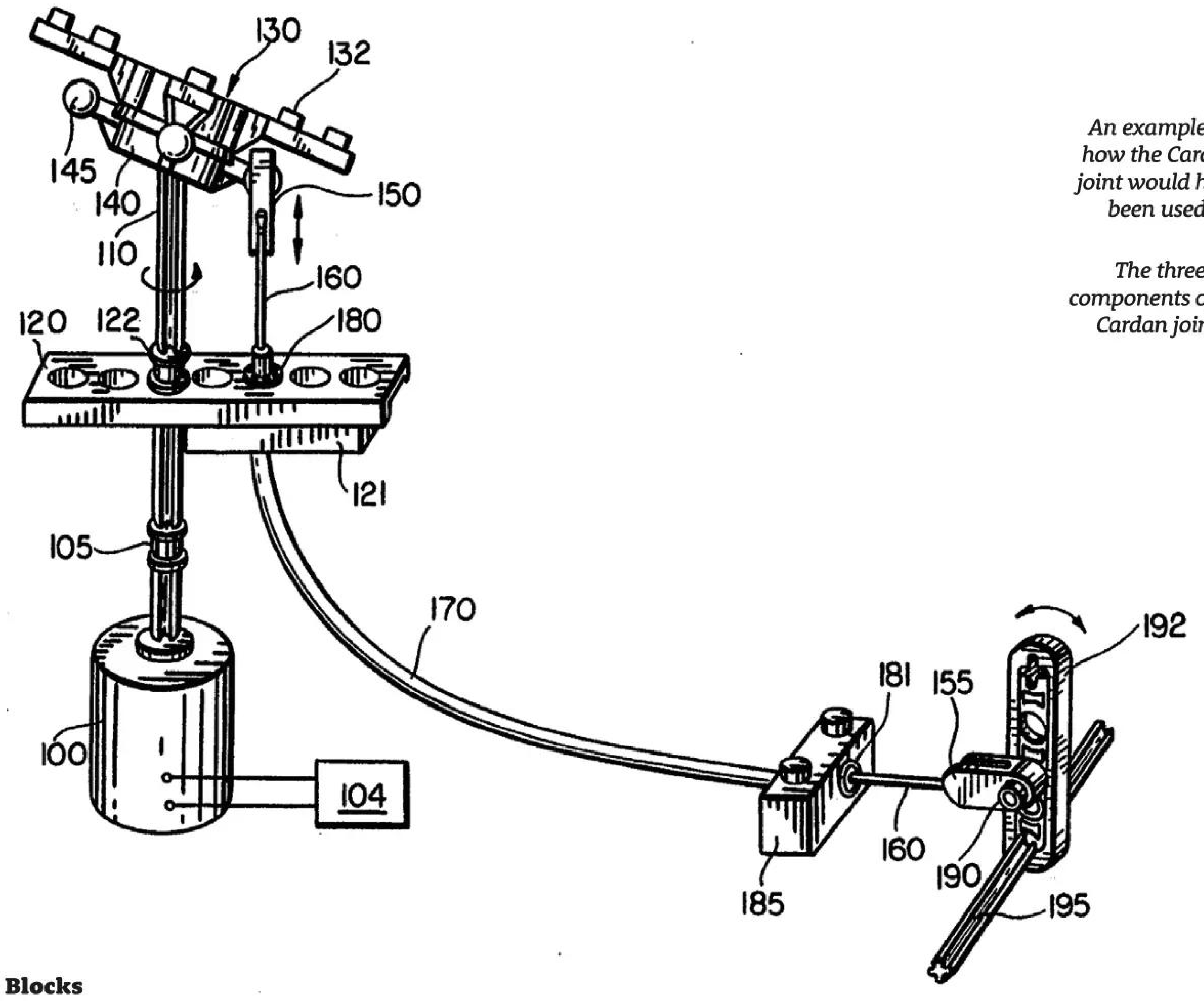
CARDAN JOINT

As the mechanics of LEGO sets, especially Technic models, grew in complexity during the 1980s, demands for more complicated functions increased. Universal joints, sometimes called Cardan Joints, had existed since at least 1977 with part 9244c01, but these were small elements and designers wondered what would be possible with larger variants. To that end, a far larger version of this mechanical joint was designed sometime prior to 1991.

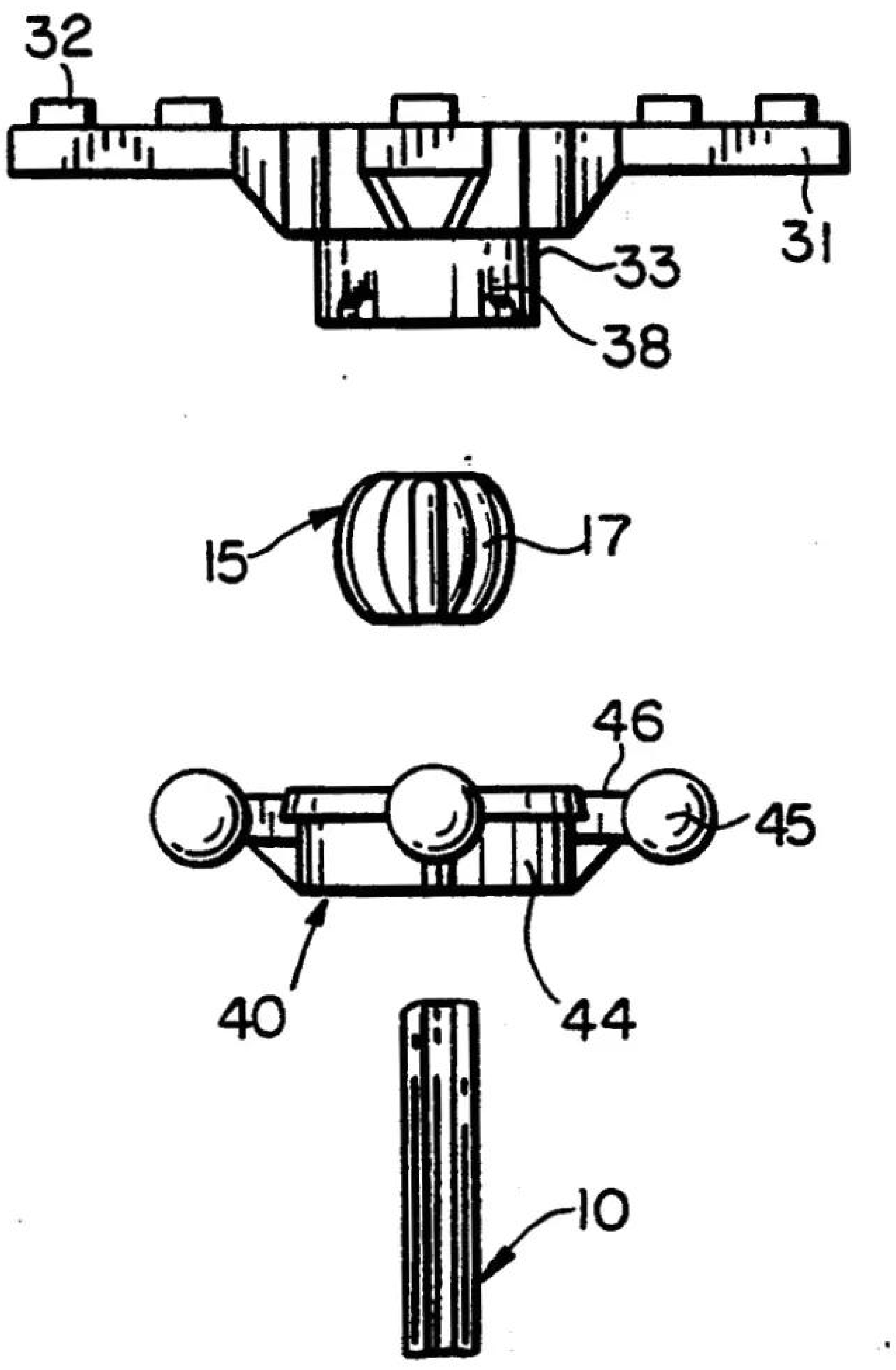
Universal or Cardan joints are used to transmit rotary motion. Here, a flexible shaft or tube would have been pulled in and out to rotate a platform that utilised an early conceptual embodiment of the mini ball joints released more than two decades later. Four unique components were patented including an anchor shaft, pivot ring, gear and platform. When assembled this construct would have been capable of rotating and spinning across a plane of approximately 150 degrees.

Later variants and uses of Cardan joints in LEGO Technic suggest that this group of elements would have been used primarily in steering applications for vehicles. Such joints are found in the Technic super cars and other vehicles. The size of these patented parts would have allowed for truly enormous vehicles had they been produced. Perhaps the models envisioned turned out too large and that is why they were never released.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



An example of how the Cardan joint would have been used.



The three components of the Cardan joint.

Five things we've learned this month...

1

LONDON HUB IS ON THE MOVE

The London Southbank is set to have a colourful new resident in 2027 — the LEGO Group is moving its central London offices to the iconic stretch of the Thames, taking over 76 Southbank, a piece of brutalist architecture designed by Sir Denys Lasdun, the architect behind the neighbouring National Theatre. Architects AHMM are being brought in to help modernise the building and make it fit for the LEGO Group's needs. "The South Bank is the cultural heart of London, which makes it the perfect location for a company dedicated to inspiring creativity," said LEGO Chief People Officer Loren I Shuster.

MASKS OF POWER WON'T BE FINISHED

A group of dedicated LEGO BIONICLE fans known as Team Kanohi has spent the last eight years developing a game titled BIONICLE: Masks of Power, with plans to release a demo in August of this year. But the LEGO Group has stepped in and ordered the project to shut down and remove itself from the public eye. Speculation suggests that the project, having grown significantly in popularity, was beginning to be easily mistaken for an official product. Team Kanohi says that they had followed the LEGO Group's Fair Play guidelines and been given the nod to continue, but something changed and Masks of Power has reached its end.

2

3

THE WORLD CAN PLAY

The LEGO Group hosted World Play Day on June 11 to celebrate the UN's International Day of Play. 2025's celebrations included events around the world, from London and Berlin to Shanghai and Boston. Each city had its own flare to make each celebration feel unique — not that anyone was likely to visit more than one spot. Boston encouraged children to reimagine their city via LEGO bricks, Shanghai and Berlin had local areas taken over by play experiences and London unveiled the Play Pavilion. Internet influencers like Mark Rober, a popular STEM content creator, were also on hand in each city to help celebrate.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

LEGO Chief Operating Officer Carsten Rasmussen penned an open letter regarding the company's dedication to combating climate change. Primarily discussing the opening of a new e-methanol factory in Denmark, the letter highlighted the crucial role collaboration plays in ensuring a greener future. "Standing alongside like-minded companies," Carsten wrote, "I was truly inspired by the shared drive to take action and create lasting change. European Energy's groundbreaking work with e-methanol is a critical step forward, and we're proud to support this initiative alongside Novo Nordisk and Maersk." The e-methanol produced will help to create a variety of LEGO elements, from minifigure hands to wheel axles.

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EUROPEAN ENERGY
RENEWABLE
ENERGY
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FOR
TOMORROW

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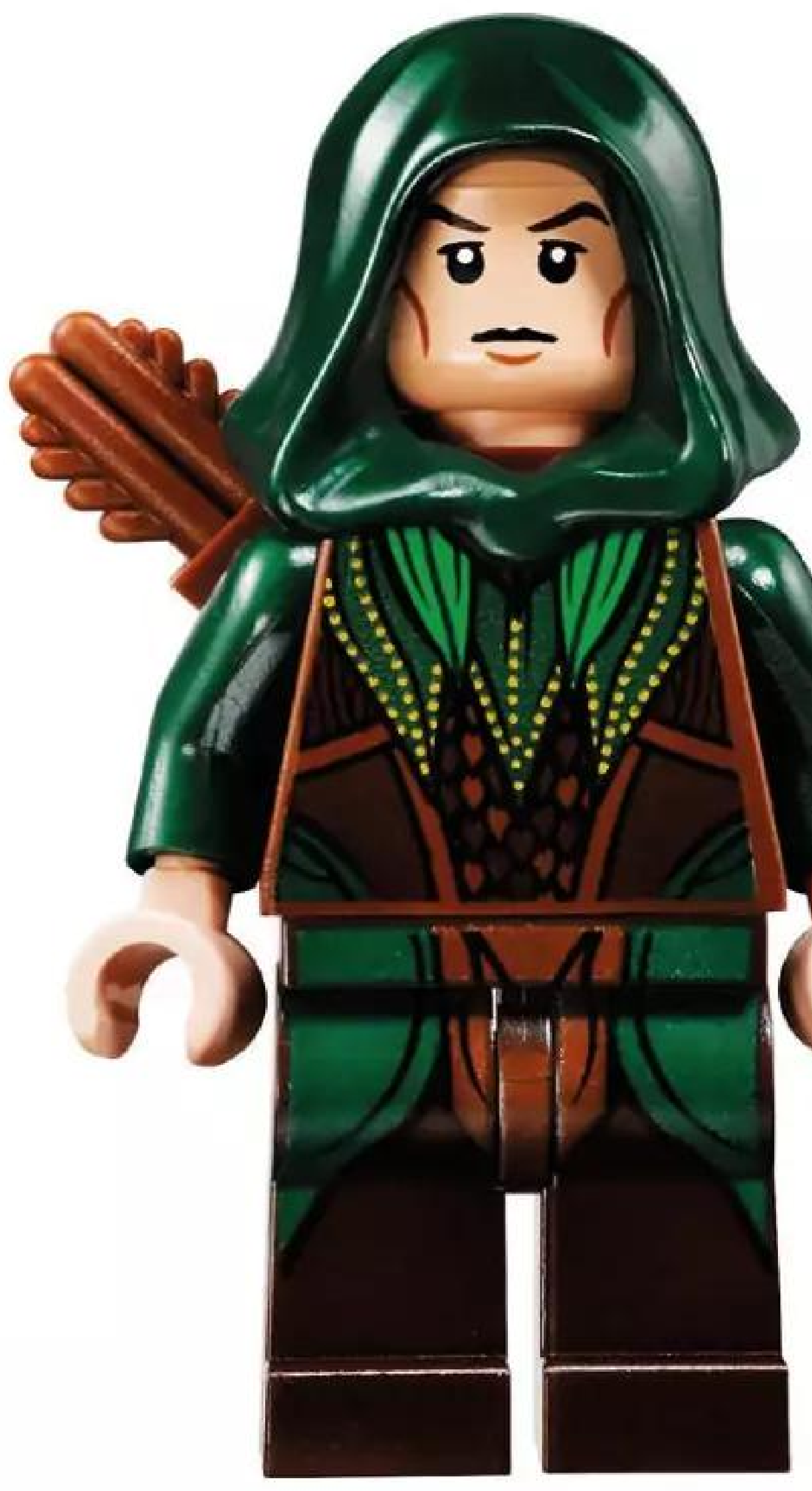
ANDOR ACTORS LOVE THEIR MINIFIGURES

The cast of Andor got a chance to check out some of the new Andor toys, which included a look at their LEGO miniatures. Diego Luna (Cassian Andor) expressed his lifelong love of the brick and Denise Gough (Dedra Meero) was eager to keep a copy for herself: "This is the best thing ever. Do I get this? Is this for me?" But Alan Tudyk, who played Cassian's sardonic droid sidekick, was most entranced by 75434 K-2SO. "This is like a young K2," he said. "This is the pictures of yourself that you find and go 'oh I look good.'".

RYAN EVERLETH

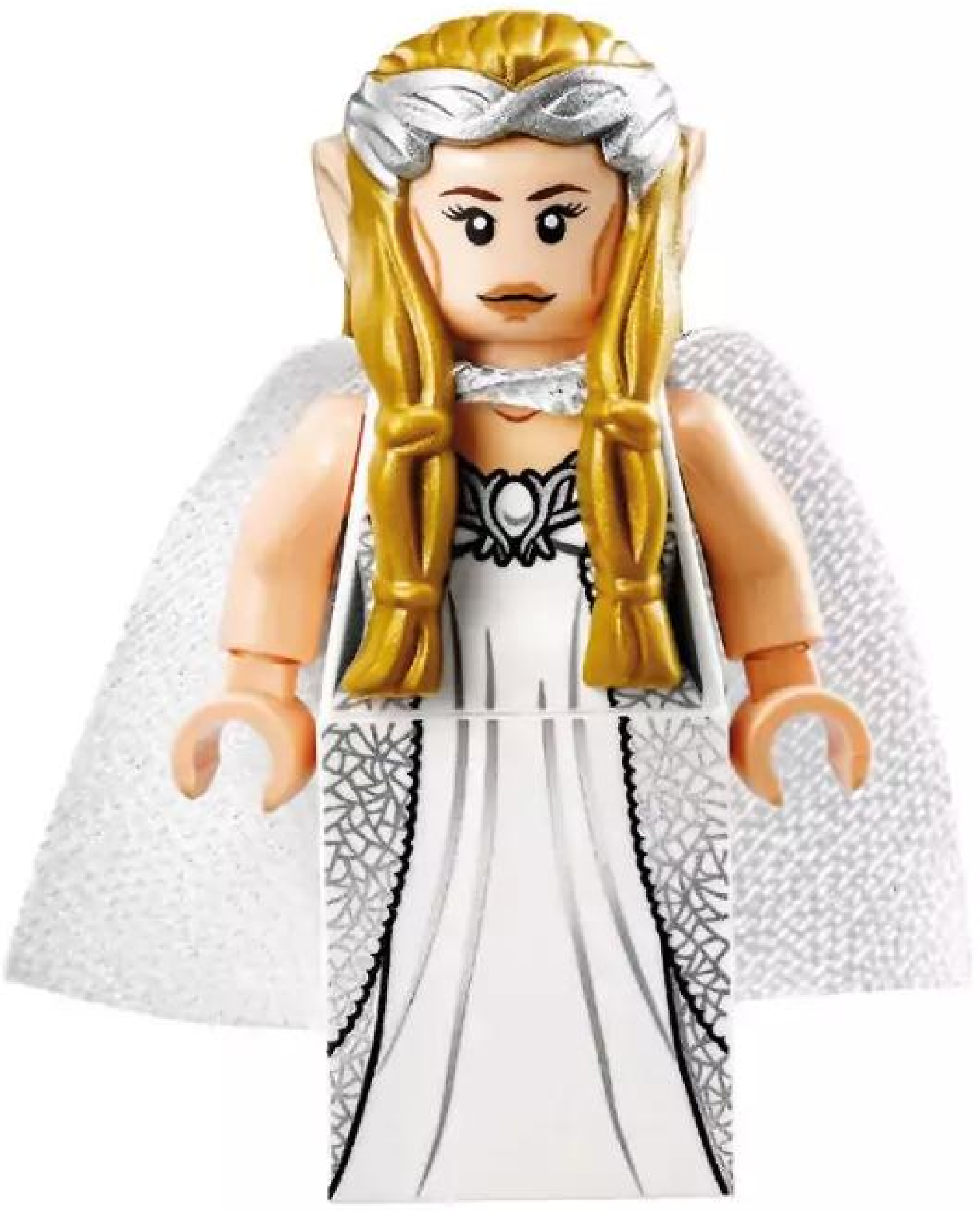
Top 10
Elven minifigures

Stories will be told and yarns will be spun about the most legendary LEGO elves



10. Mirkwood Elf Archer

Named characters in licensed sets are great, but army builders are essential too. The Mirkwood Elf Archer is one of the best minifigures to collect. Included in 79012 Mirkwood Elf Army, this archer really captures the darker, almost corrupt aesthetic of Mirkwood, which slowly fell under the influence of Sauron's increasing power. This Elf's emerald robes and darker colour palette suggests verdancy with a touch of pollution. The torso and leg printing together are intricate with some nice details. Woodland elves are famously fierce fighters, so wandering orcs best beware.

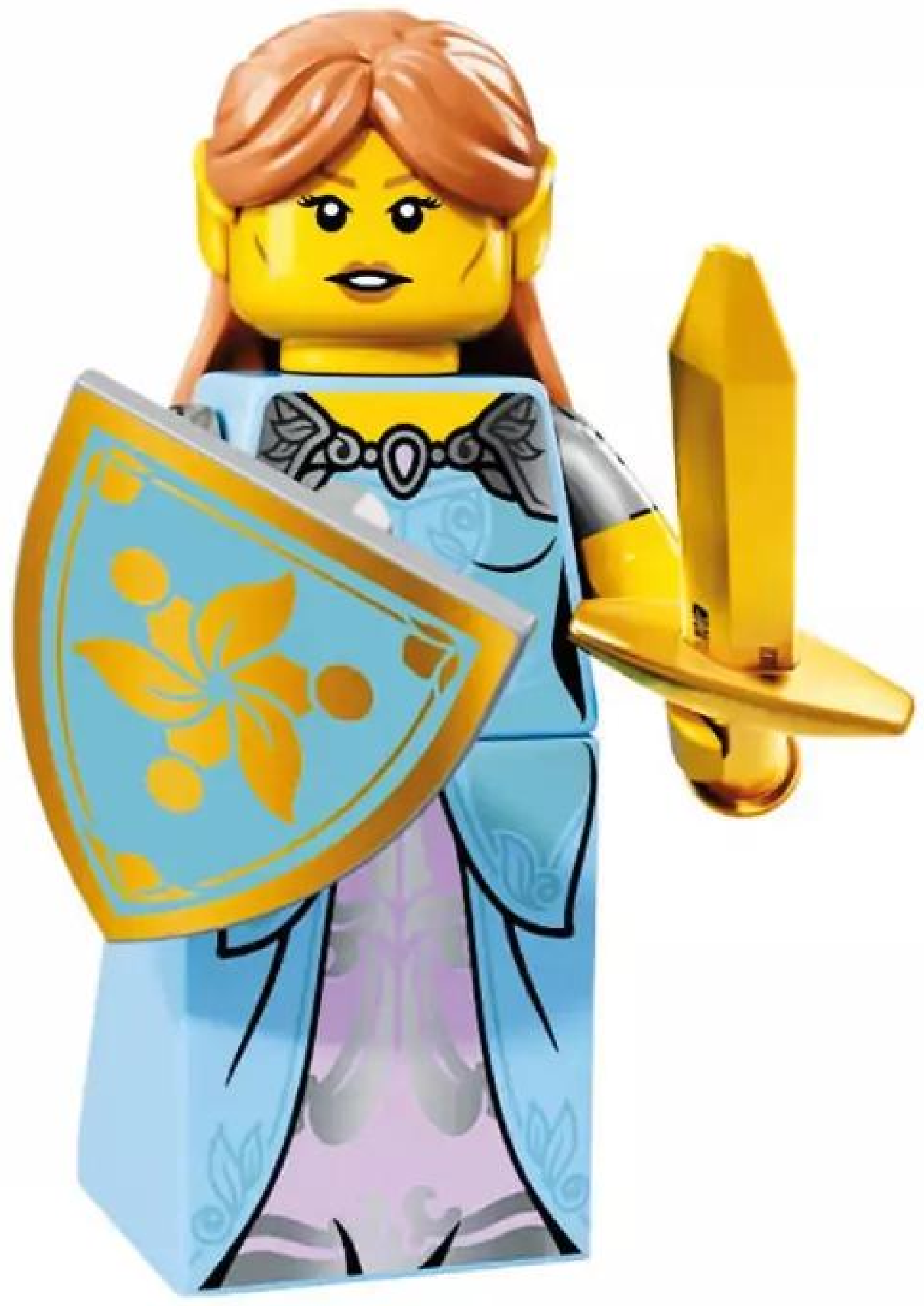


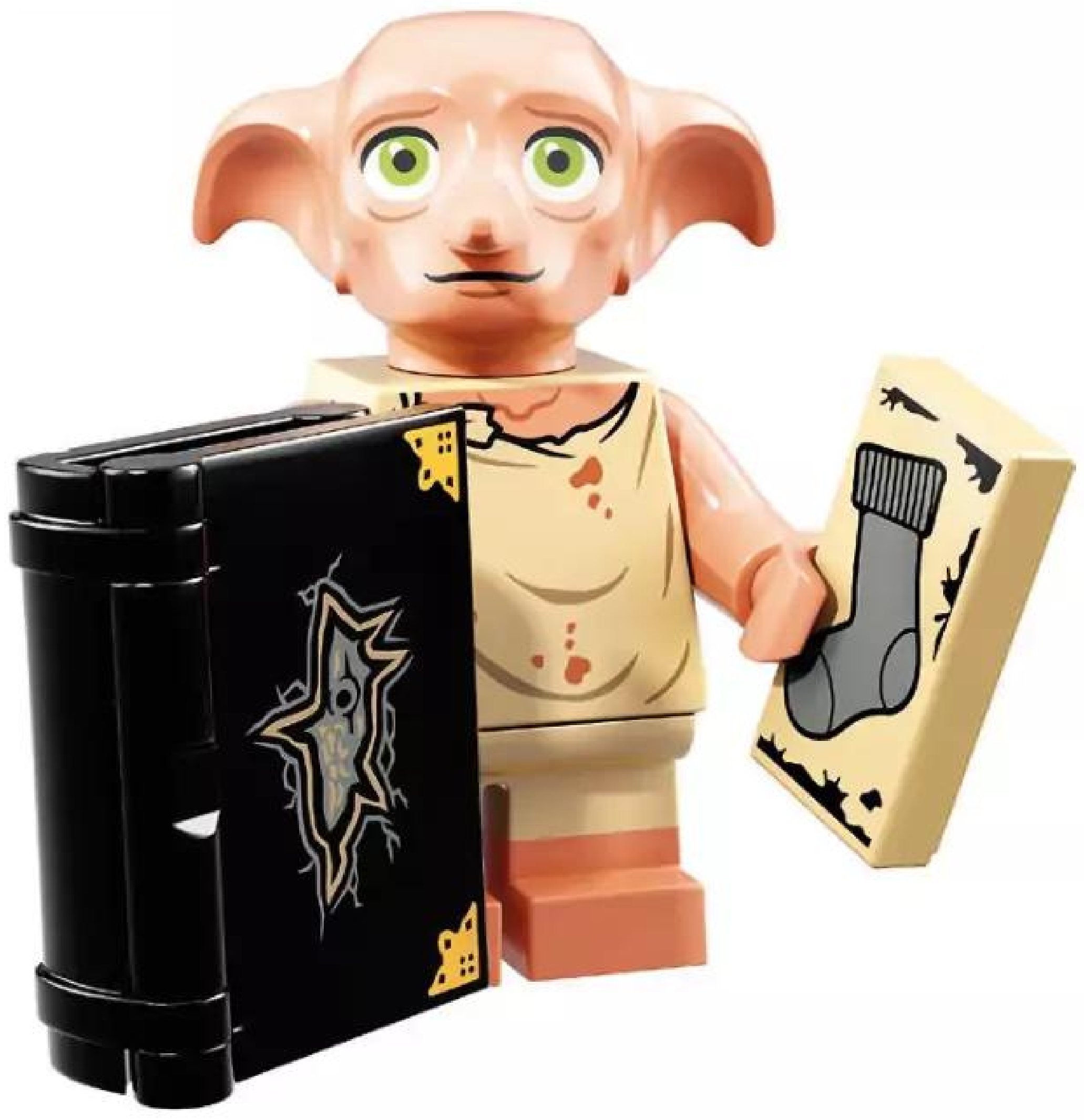
9. Galadriel

Good minifigures are not always consigned to massive sets, as proven by 79015 Witch-king Battle, which despite its 101 piece count has three stellar (and exclusive) minifigures. Included within this group is Galadriel, who has come to save her friend Gandalf. To do so, she doesn't wear armour like Elrond; instead, she wears beautiful robes of dazzling white, with silver details on the torso and dress pieces adding luxury. The cape is also shining and her alternative face depicts her more powerful, corrupted form. Despite The Lord of the Ring's resurgence in the LEGO brick, Galadriel has yet to reappear– hopefully she will return to shelves again soon.

8. Elf Maiden

Here is an elvish beauty. Included in Collectible Minifigures Series 17, the Elf Maiden is a truly lovely figure. This character leans more into elvish elegance than fierceness, wearing a beautiful metallic blue dress with silver accents. She also wears an equally detailed lavender and armour on her arms. The figure's sharp facial features capture some of the race's expected characteristics, including the high cheekbones and piercing eyes. The shield also has a floral design and the fierce golden sword – underestimate this shield maiden at your peril.



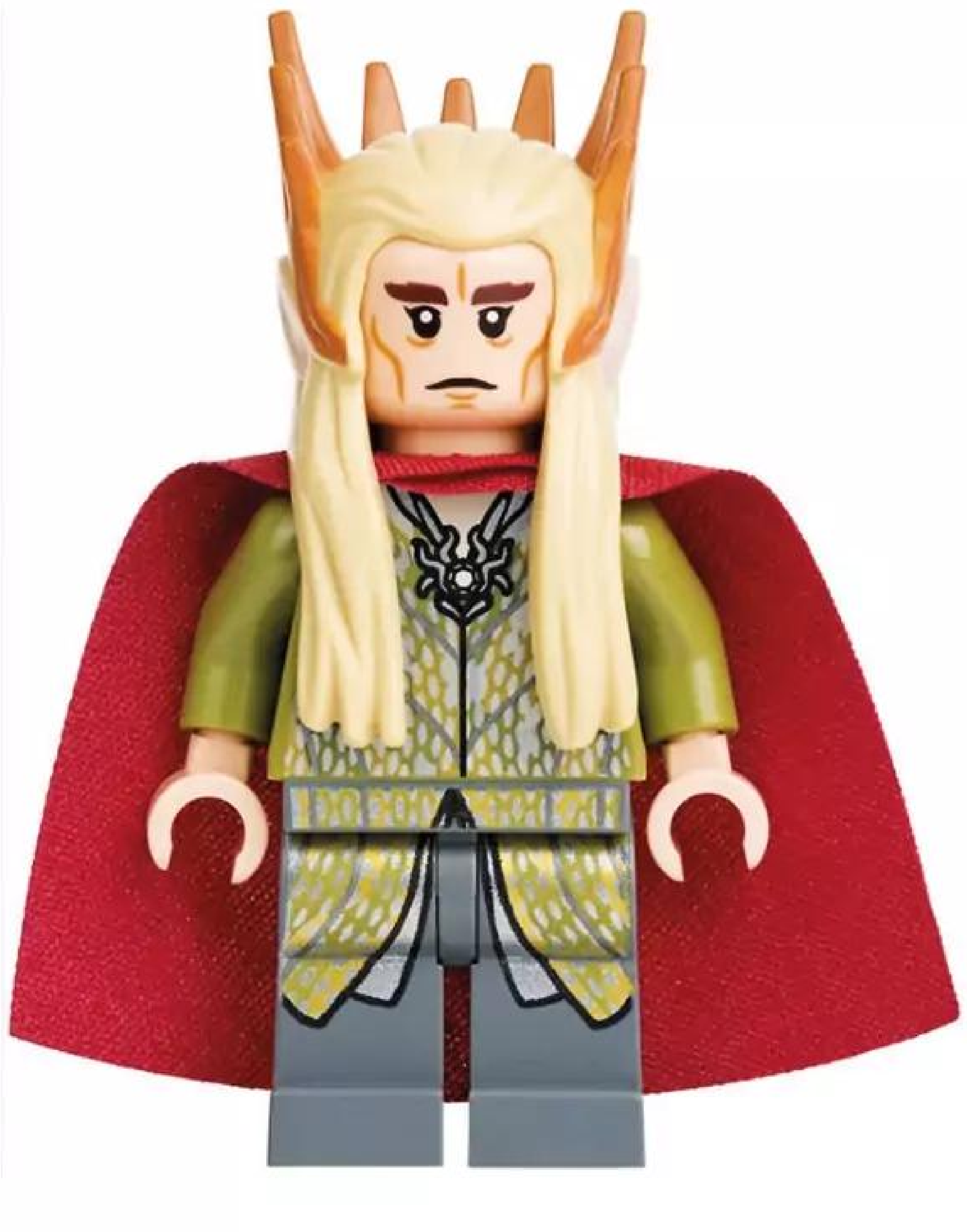


7. Dobby

On a list of fierce and noble warriors, a House-elf makes a refreshing reprieve. In the Harry Potter series, Dobby is known for his determined dedication to the central hero. Since the character's introduction in The Chamber of Secrets, Dobby has made steady appearances throughout the Harry Potter theme, with the best coming in 2018's Collectible Minifigures series, which used a new mould to create the character's distinctive head. Dobby's honest expression is perfect and his pillow case top is suitably tatty. Sometimes a simple design is accurate.

6. Thranduil

All of those Mirkwood Elf Archers need a leader and who better than Thranduil, the utterly fabulous king of the Woodland Realm? Also included in 79012 Mirkwood Elf Army, Thranduil leads the charge against the orc invaders, so it's a bit odd that he's wearing his robes instead of his lustrous armour. Still, what is here is beautiful – the olive green robes are delicately patterned with gold and silver, which all contrast nicely against the red cape. The dual-sided headpiece depicts both Thranduil's anger and his steely personality. The headpiece features his luscious blond hair and striking crown. Clearly this is where Legolas gets his style from.



5. Elrond

Elrond establishes Rivendell as a refuge for elves fleeing from the wrath of Sauron after the fall of Eregion; afterwards, it remains a haven for weary travellers, especially those of a smaller stature. It's apt that, just as 10316 The Lord of the Rings: Rivendell is the definitive model for that location, the minifigure of Rivendell's Lord in the set is the best so far. The dress piece gives a wide canvas for Elrond's elegant robes to be depicted in full detail and the dark red offers a wonderful contrast to the silver vest. The face is lacking a little gravitas, but otherwise he's spot on.

4. Elf Wizard

Elves always feel inherently magical, but nowhere is that better encapsulated than in the Elf Wizard from 21348 Dungeons & Dragons: Red Dragon's Tale. This Wizard looks particularly majestic, with robes of blue and lavender and some highly intricate printing (the sash goes nicely across both the torso and dress). This figure also has a new elven hairpiece and a selection of fun spell tiles, including the famous fireball. This Wizard features shoulder armour, meaning they're ready to get their hands dirty too with a magical staff. Time to cast a spell and cause some destruction.

3. Haldir

Haldir is the general who arrives with a contingent of elves ready to help the defenders of Helm's Deep in the film adaptation of The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers. Whilst the character is forgettable, this minifigure, which comes in 9474 The Battle of Helm's Deep, isn't. Red and gold makes for a stunning colour combination on a set of armour, with lots of details and flourishes on both the torso and leg pieces – the gold arms work especially well against the red cape. Haldir is fiercely stylish here, just like the rest of Tolkien's elves.

2. Elf Bard

Elves are often connected to music and their race pairs very well with bards during Dungeons and Dragons campaigns for their keen senses, dexterity and inherent magical ability. This Elf Bard can be found singing in boxes of Collectible Minifigures Dungeons and Dragons and is completely charming. It is immediately apparent that this Elf has striking fashion sense – teal waistcoat, orange boots and a magenta scarf all contrast with the Elf's snow-white hair (a new, short-hair wig with elvish ears). Both character heads have singing designs – this minifigure certainly hits all the right notes.

1. Elf

Collectible Minifigures makes army building much easier and those looking to create a fantasy army of elves only had to wait until Series 3 launched to get the aptly named Elf. Series 1 has the Forestman, who also wears green, but that's where the similarities end. The Elf is kitted out in a beautiful set of emerald and silver armour. This figure also marked the introduction of a new bow-and-arrow piece, which is apt given how often elves are depicted as master marks people, and a new hairpiece with the expected pointed ears. The shield is great too, featuring a deer design. Long may this Elf reign.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

This LEGO Life

FINALLY DITCHING THE BOXES

Upon returning home from university for the summer, Ryan decided to take the leap and send most of his empty LEGO boxes to the recycling bin

> **"When boxes start piling on top of boxes and demanding larger living quarters, the idea that 'one box doesn't take up that much space' goes out the window."**

LEGO boxes are a fickle beast. Functionally, they only exist to keep all of the bricks together before a set is built and serve no express purpose once the set is together. A LEGO set is a LEGO set, after all — not a cardboard box. And yet many LEGO fans find themselves holding onto the boxes long after the set is built and comfortably living on a shelf. Each to their own, of course, but I found myself questioning the feasibility of such a practice when I returned home from university after the latest term.

Put frankly, my bedroom was overrun by LEGO boxes. Two corners were packed with them, bits of the wall had boxes stacked like posters and my closet almost had more boxes than clothes inside. I had never had an issue with this before, having explicitly designed my room to look this way, but after living without the constant, overwhelming presence of a tonne of cardboard while at university, I decided things needed to change.

And that wasn't an easy decision to make — that might sound a little dramatic, given that I'm talking about empty boxes and not the heaps of old family heirlooms that no-one knows what to do with, but it was a difficult choice. I've been keeping every single LEGO box I've acquired since 2015. I'm not exactly sure what made me start keeping them, though I suspect it was my twelve-year-old self learning how much more valuable sets are when sold with the boxes. Not that I'm likely to sell most of them.

Whatever the motive, the result was a full decade's worth of LEGO boxes stashed in my room. So there was a fair bit of nostalgia mixed in with the endless stacks of cardboard; the 75100 First Order Snowspeeder box was still hanging around – that set was my prized Force Friday purchase back in 2015.

That sort of nostalgia kept popping back up as I worked on sorting through everything — my first Winter Village set, my first Ultimate Collector Series set and some of my favourite sets ever. Despite those being some of the largest and most unwieldy boxes, I knew I had to keep those.

But for every sentimental LEGO set box I dug up, there were seven that I had no attachment to. Does anyone care about 75226 Inferno Squad Battle Pack? A palm-sized LEGO City set from 2016? A LEGO Dimensions box? I sure don't.

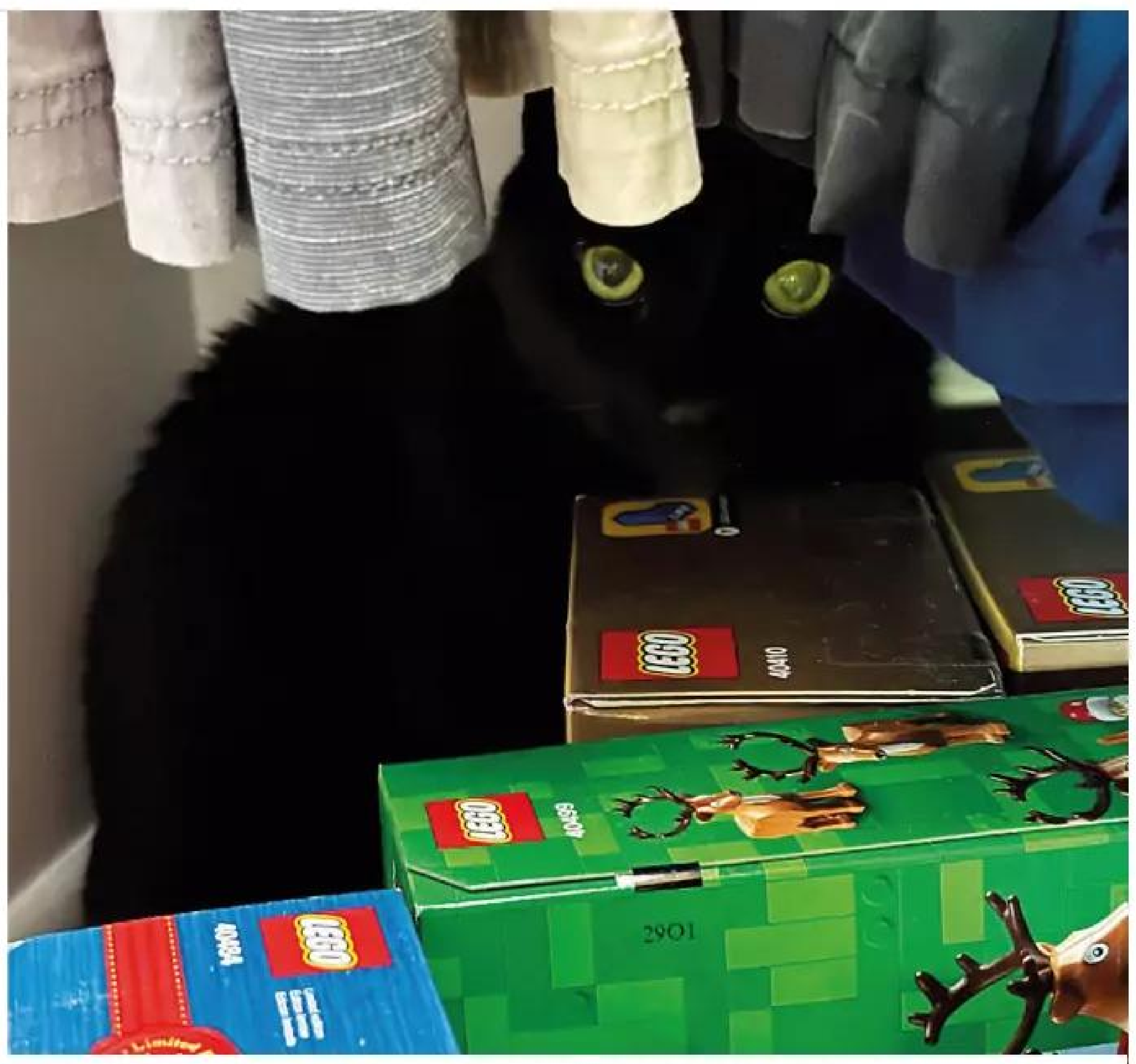
A single battle pack doesn't take up that much space — that's likely some of the logic I used in 2015 to justify keeping everything. But when that single battle pack box expands to a dozen, when boxes start piling on top of boxes and demanding larger living quarters, the idea that 'one box doesn't take up that much space' goes out the window.

Now, in the interest of being totally honest, I did still have some hesitations about sacrificing so many boxes to the bin. I might not care about the miscellaneous boxes from a decade of impulse purchases, but every set would one day achieve 'old and rare' status — the very thing making me arbitrarily keep boxes for any sets from 2010 or before.

What helped me shake off those feelings was the realisation that just because 2022's 75322 Hoth AT-ST might one day be the ultimate childhood nostalgia set for a kid today, it will never hold a candle to 2016's 75153 AT-ST Walker for me. The magic of the Rogue One: A Star Wars Story hype and getting all of the sets for my birthday and Christmas in 2016 is what gives that AT-ST its meaning to me, not the fact it's nearly ten years old. That became my metric for determining what went and what stayed.

It took two giant LEGO shopping bags to carry all of the boxes I decided to get rid of, even after they had all been flattened. It still felt strange carrying them out to the kerb, despite my best efforts to tell myself I'd be better off without them. In the hours before they disappeared for good, part of me considered rushing out and saving them in dramatic fashion. But they had already been flattened and crushed in preparation. Their fate was sealed.

I must admit, it's bizarre knowing that I can't look at the box to 75200 Ahch-To Island Training anymore. But then I look at the new shelf that replaced a pile of boxes and all of the Rogue One items filling the freshly cleared space and I realise that I've ended up with something that's infinitely more valuable than the LEGO boxes ever could be. The boxes had memories, yes, but saying goodbye to them made room for things that have even greater meaning and memories behind them — and look much better than a pile of cardboard.



__Clockwise from top left:__ 'A lot of boxes' would be an understatement.

Ryan's cat enjoyed the sorting process.

Now there is space for actual items, not their boxes.

Boxes had overtaken every space they could.

A more organised solution.

All of the flatted boxes for the bin.

Mini Krusty Burger

Made of 100% LEGO bricks. Contains 0% real food. May not actually be licensed or endorsed by the LEGO Group

The Krusty Burger is one of the most iconic landmarks in The Simpsons, serving as Springfield's preferred spot for questionably sourced fast food and endless comedic moments. Its greasy charm, bright signage and distinctive architectural quirks make it instantly recognisable to fans of the show. The new set, 10352 The Simpsons: Krusty Burger, captures the spirit of the animated comedy.

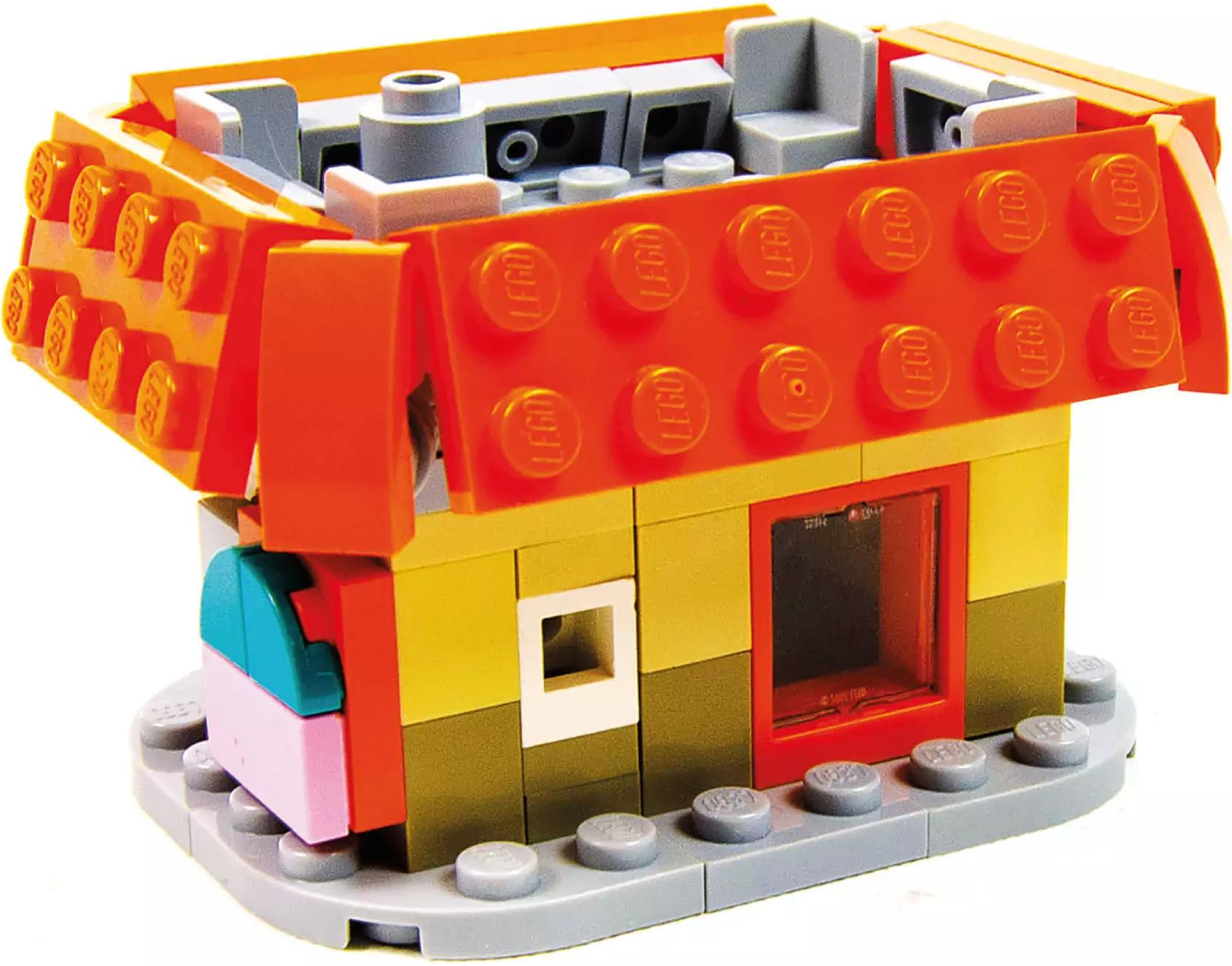
Its boxy shape translates well to the LEGO System's modular format, allowing builders to capture the essence of the building while working at a small and manageable scale.

That said, recreating Krusty Burger in miniature comes with a few challenges. The most prominent obstacle is replicating the restaurant's iconic orange roof, especially the angled corners that define its silhouette. At this scale, conventional slope bricks won't suffice, so paddle elements are cleverly used to tuck sloped curves into each corner, preserving the structure's unique geometry without adding unnecessary bulk.

Another difficulty lies in incorporating all of the doors and windows in their correct colours. This is resolved using a combination of headlight bricks and grille tiles, which provide enough texture and colour variation to evoke the original design while maintaining the integrity of the miniature form.

Springfield offers a wealth of inspiration for LEGO builders, with its absurd yet detailed world. The Krusty Burger is just one of many locations that can be captured in miniature form. Imagine a scaled-down Moe's Tavern, the Nuclear Power Plant control room or even the Kwik-E-Mart—all packed with tiny details. With such rich source material and decades of storytelling, The Simpsons provides an awesome playground for imaginative LEGO creatives.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/krusty-burger

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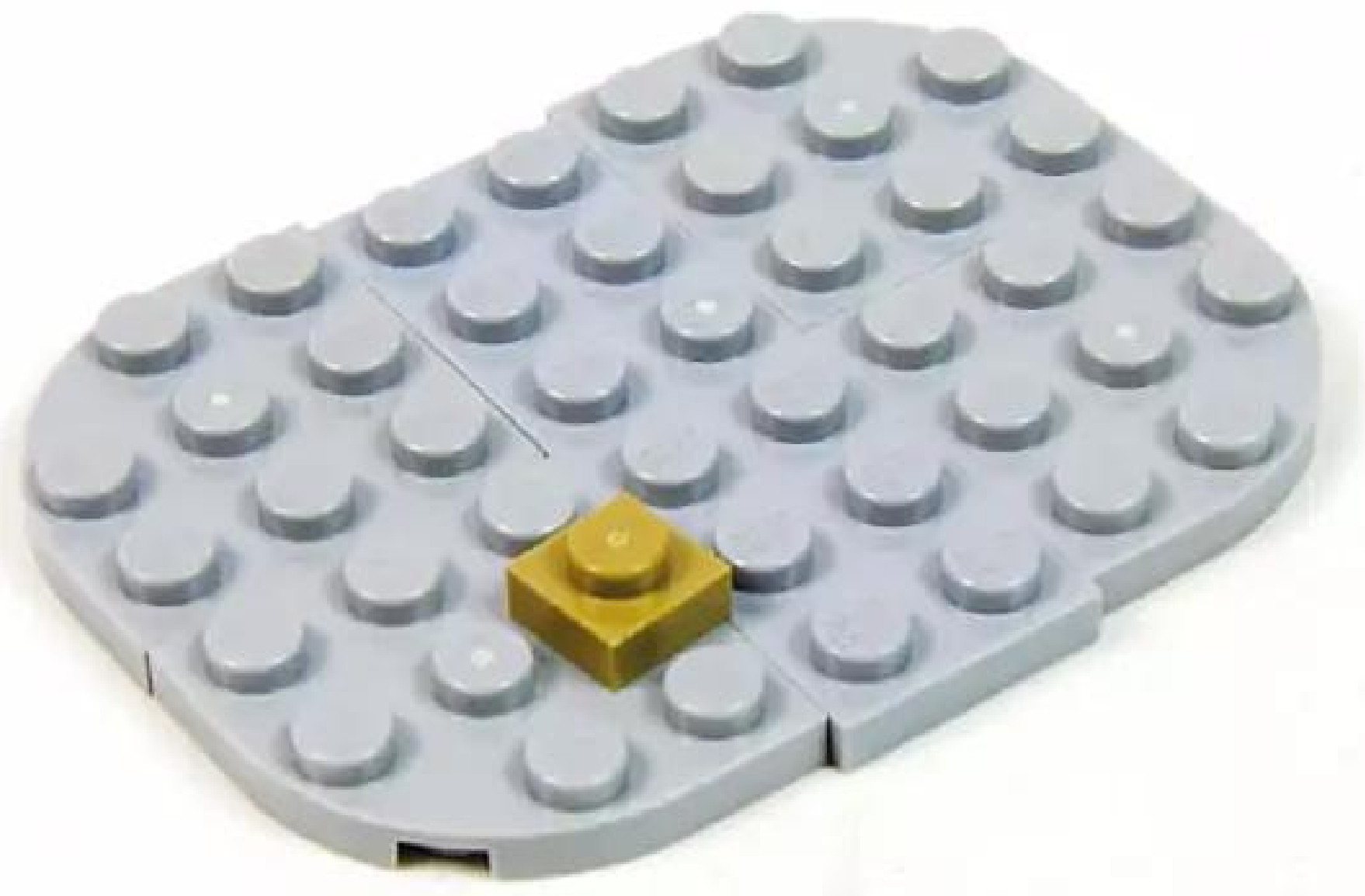

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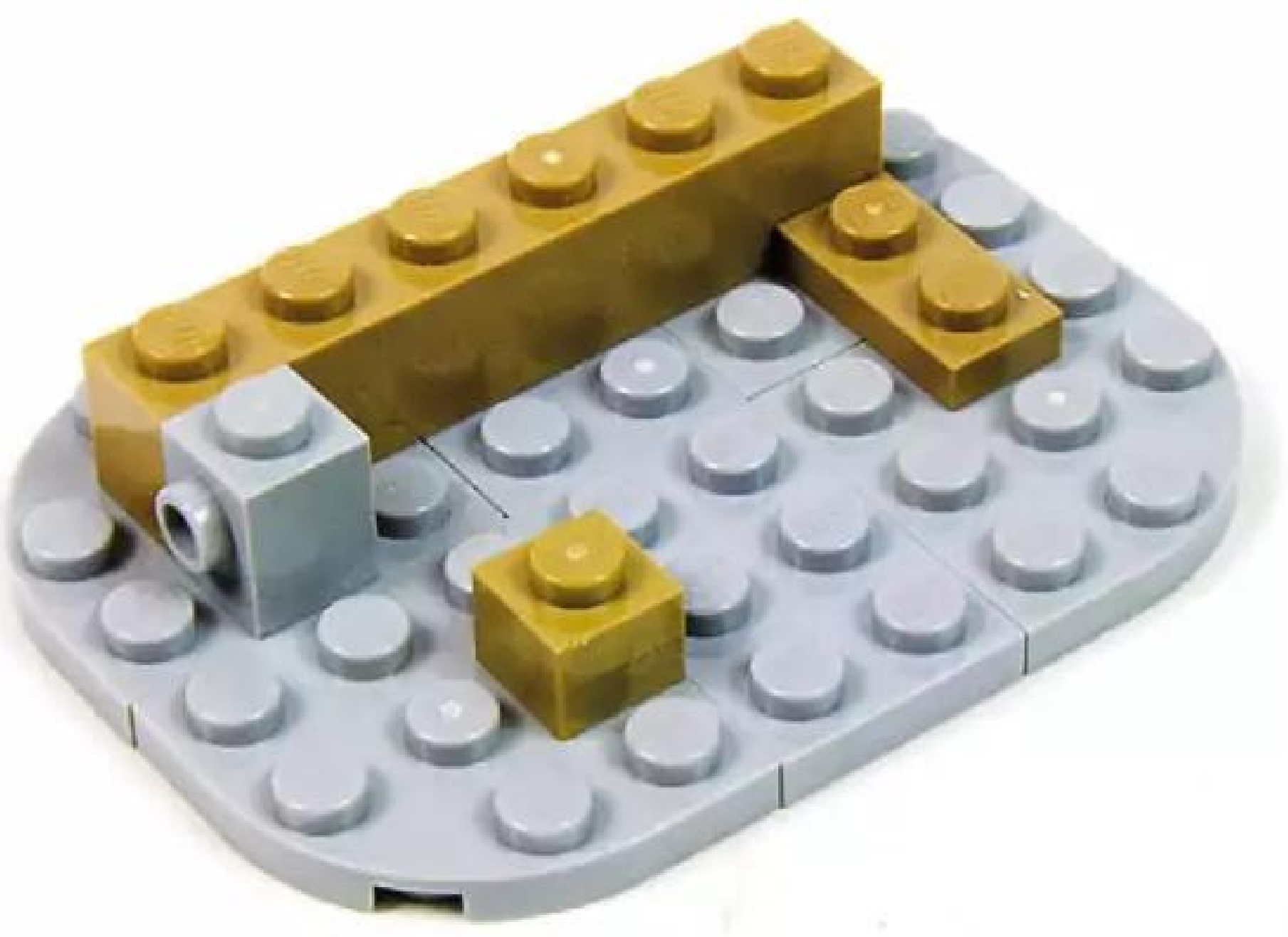

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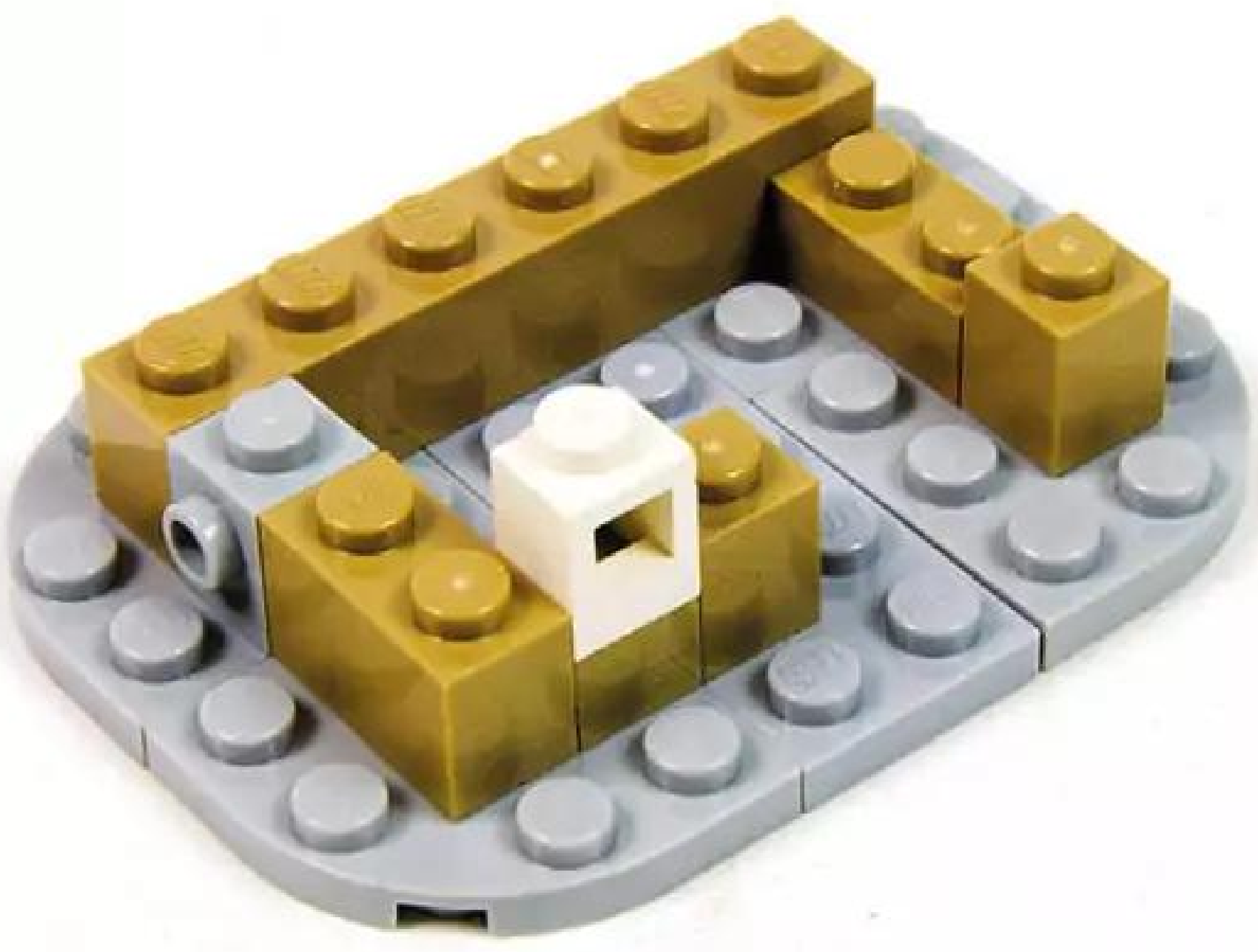

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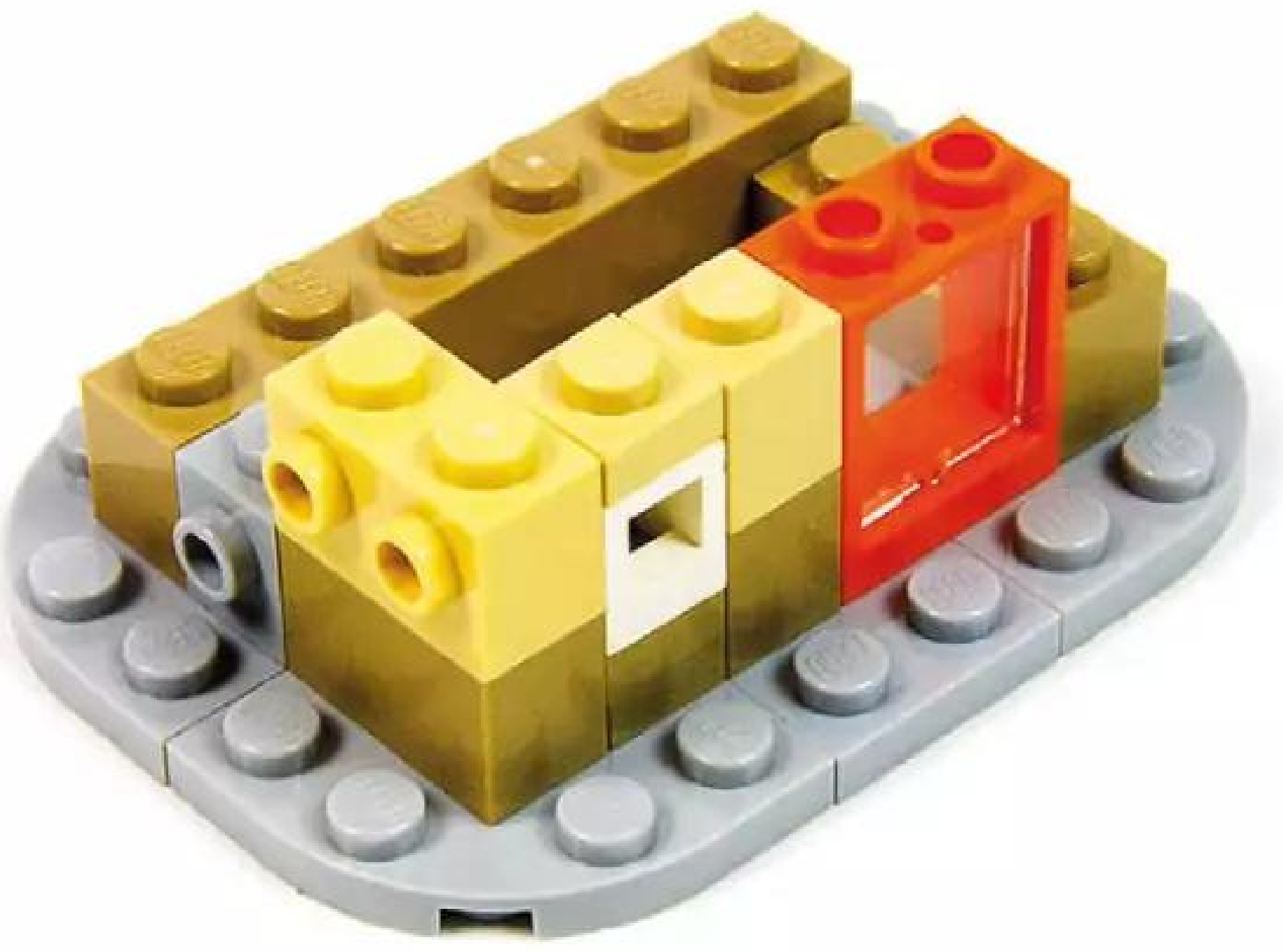

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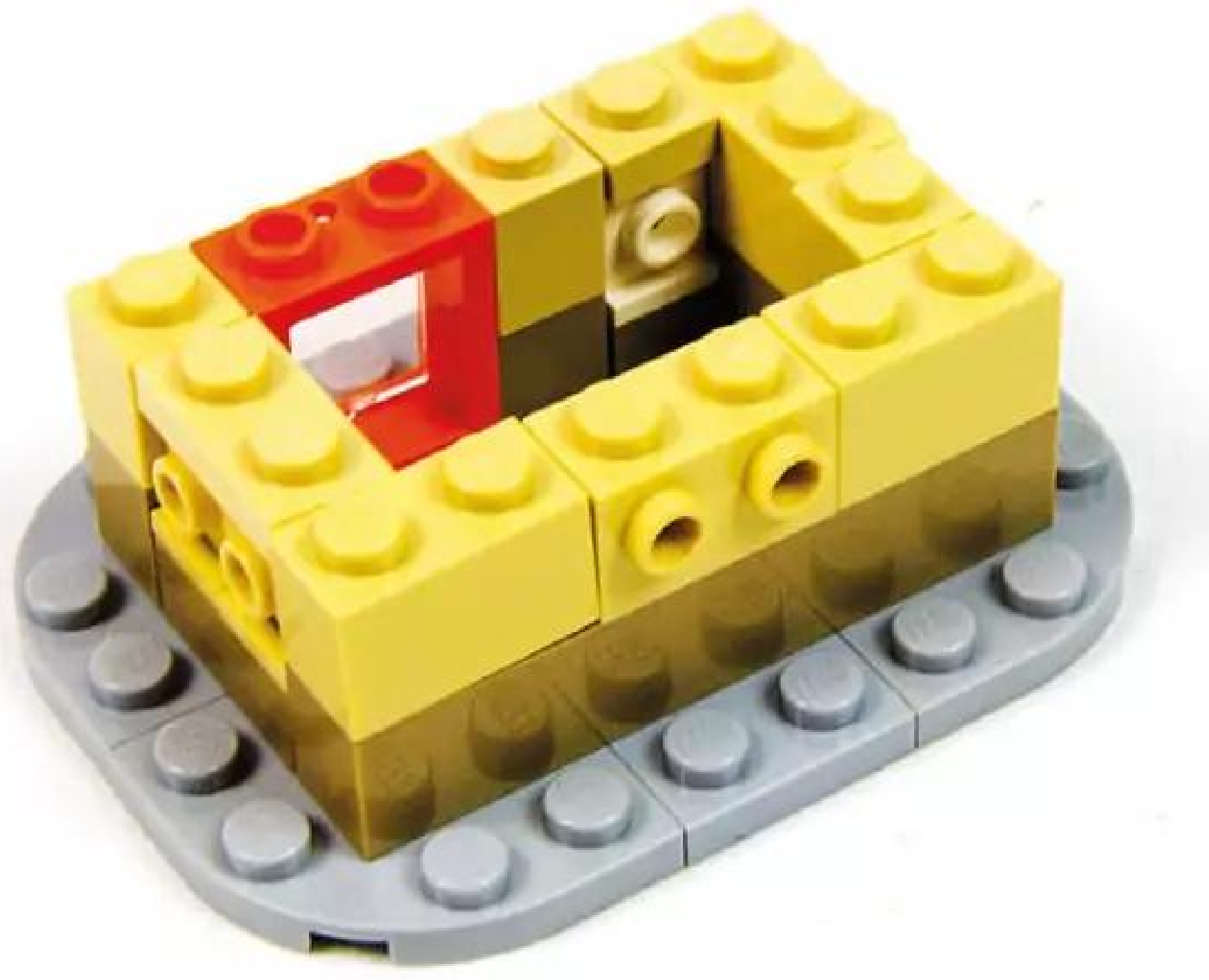

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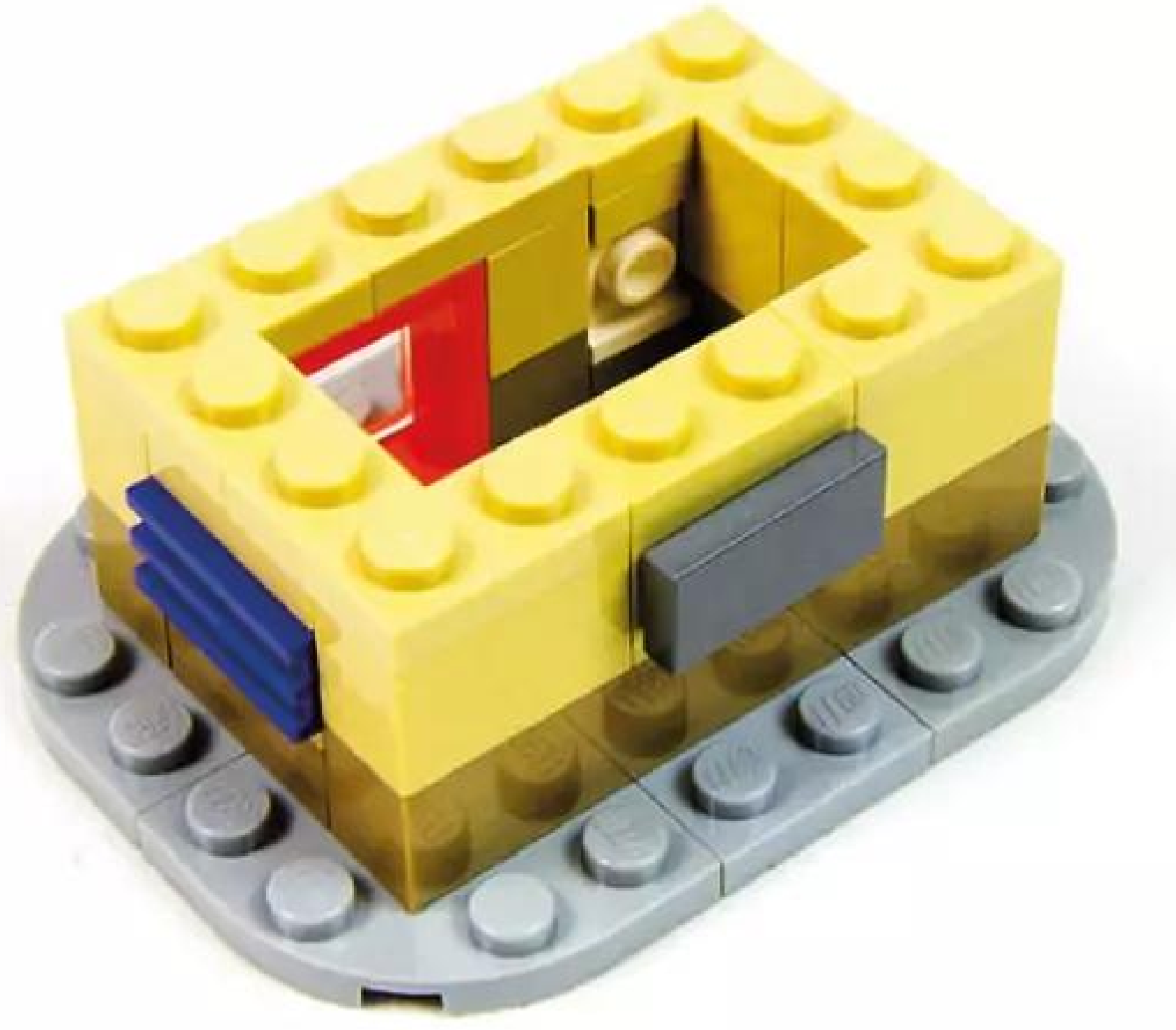

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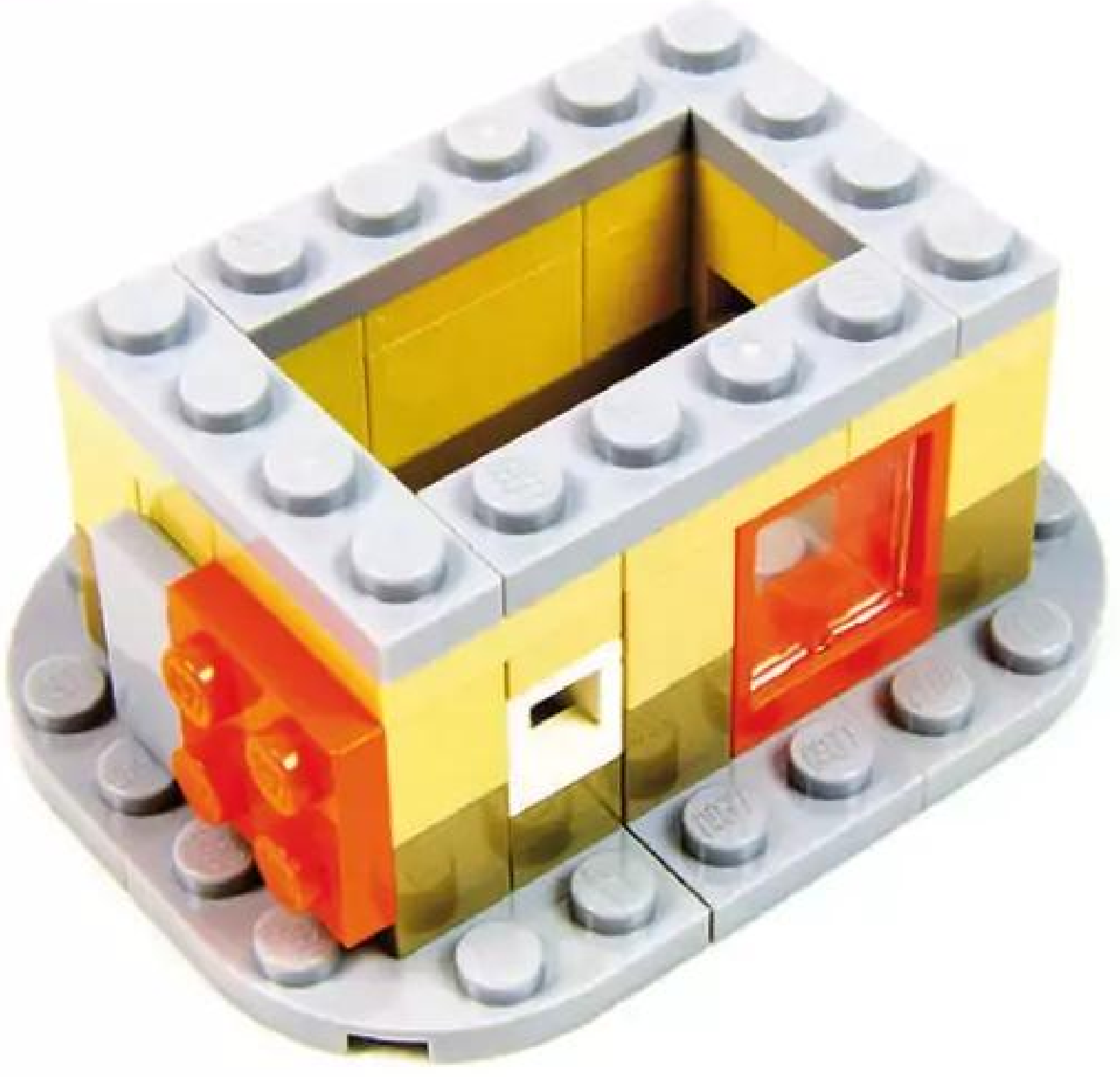

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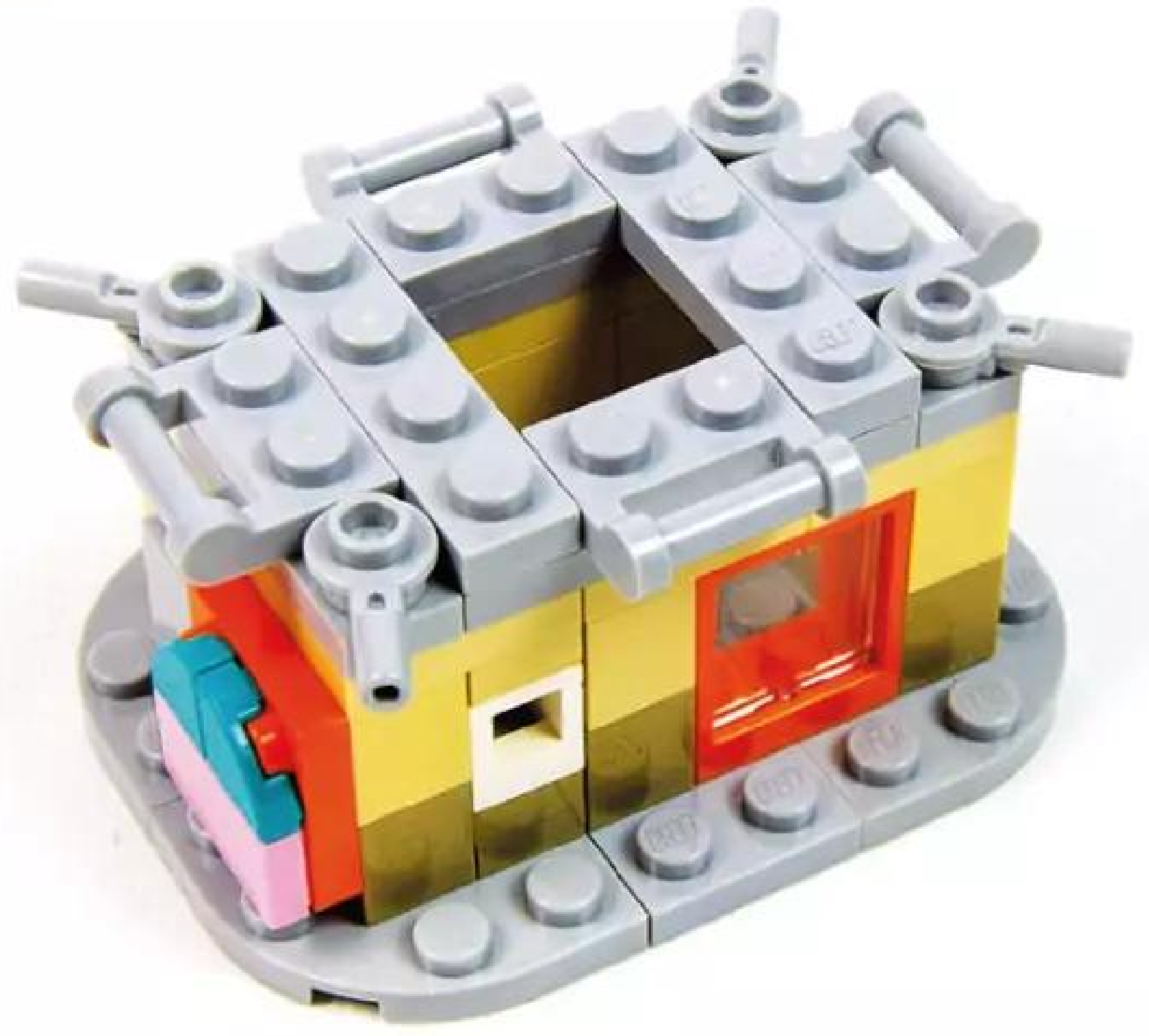

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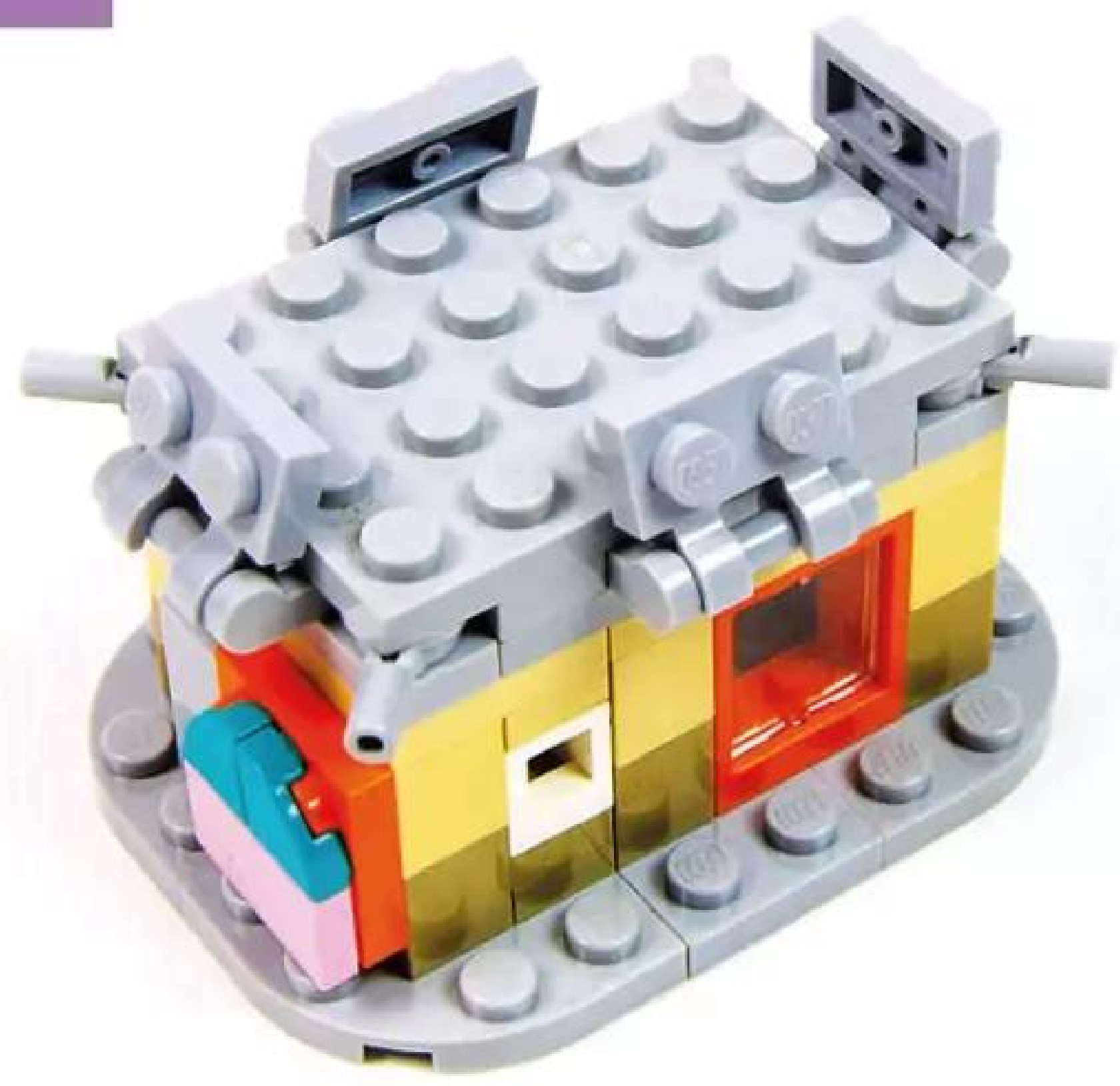

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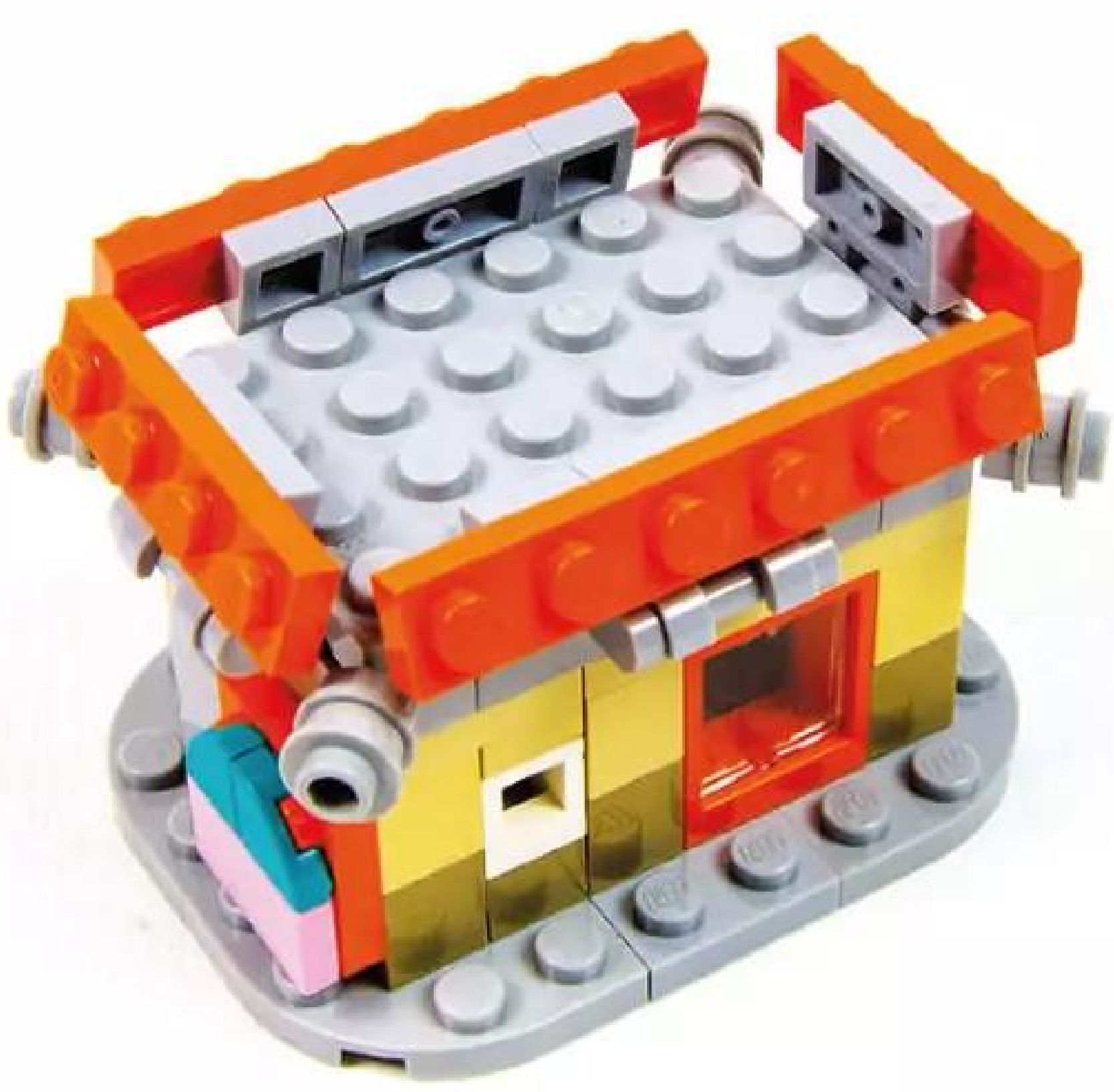

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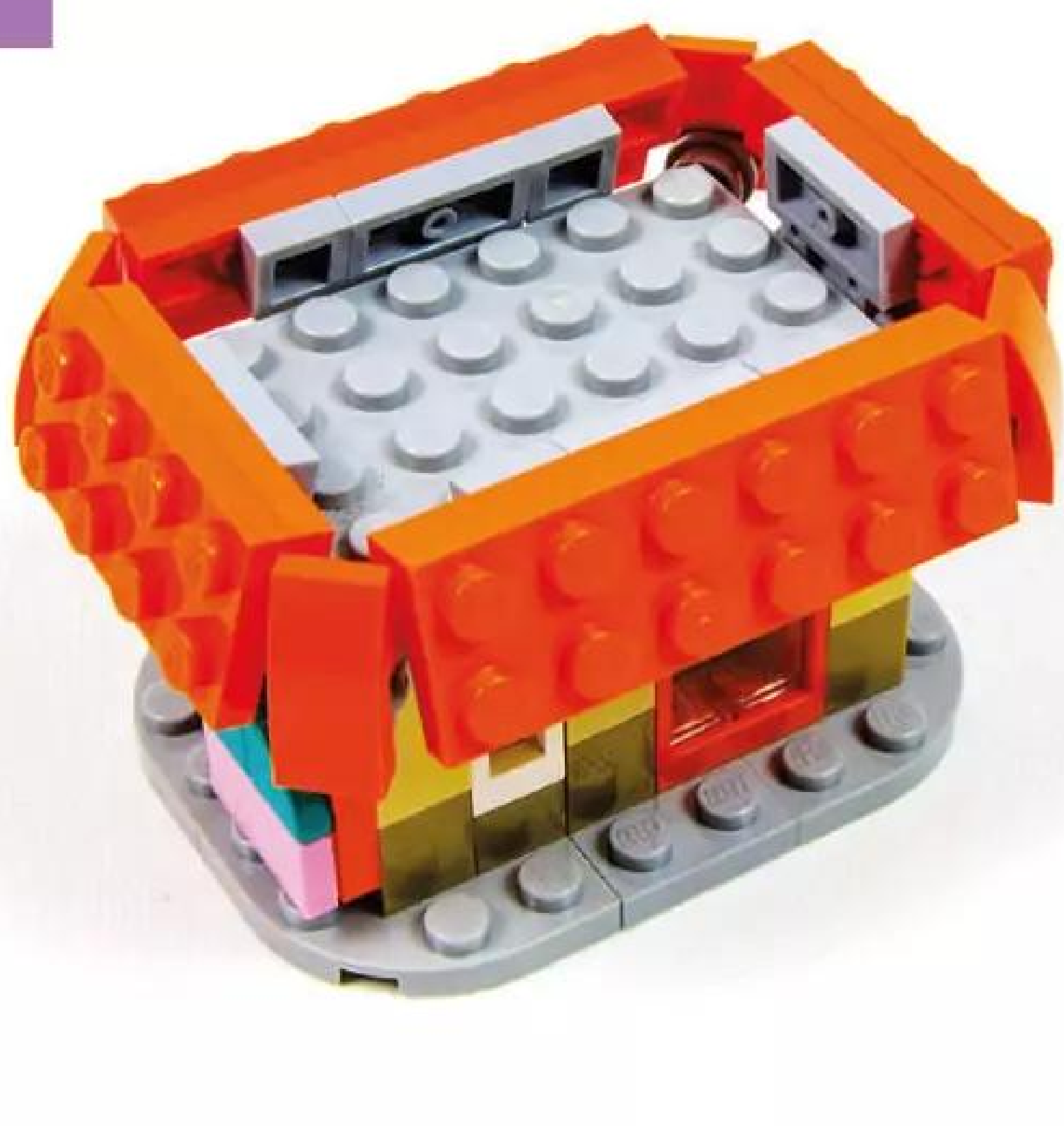

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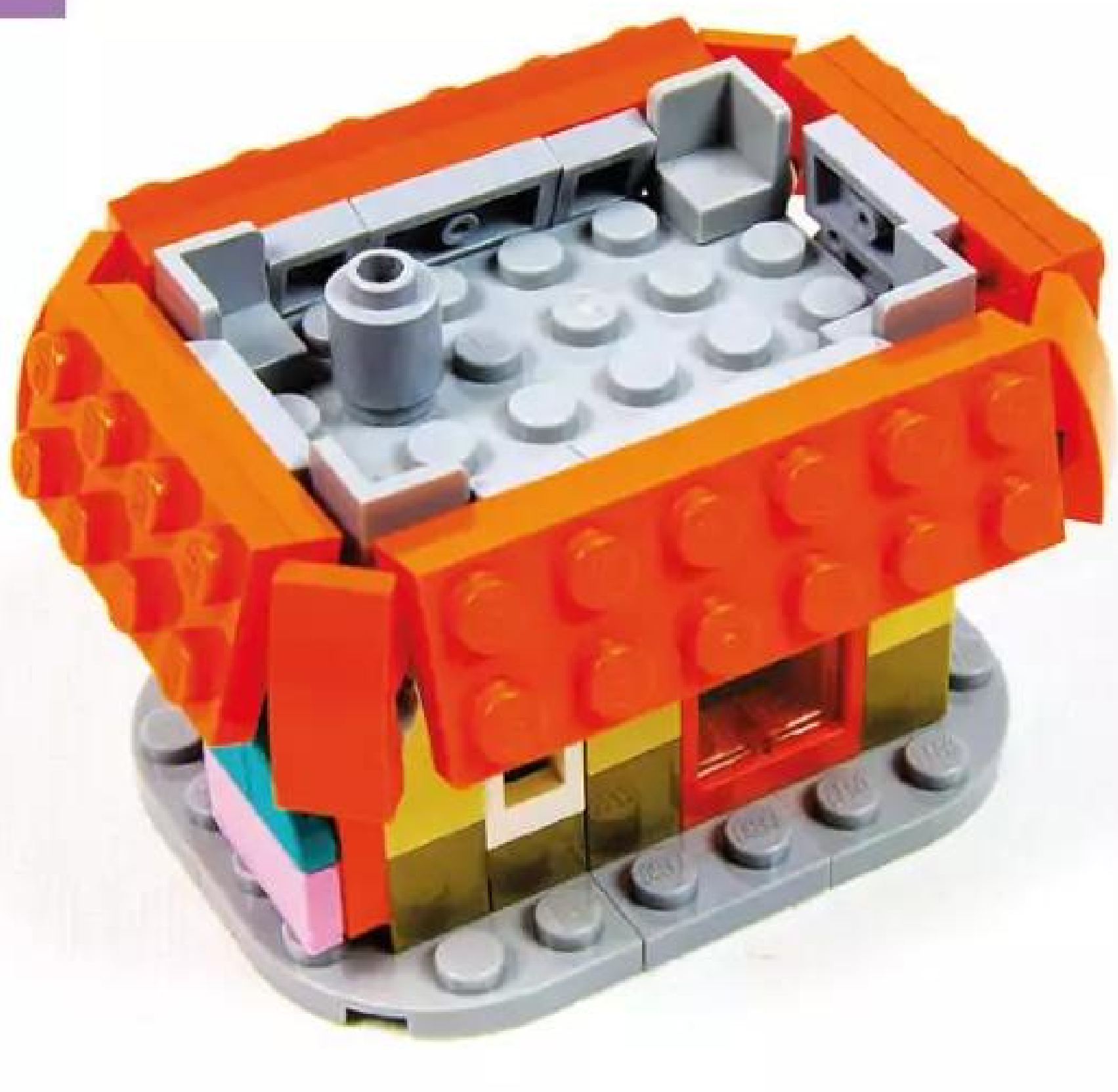

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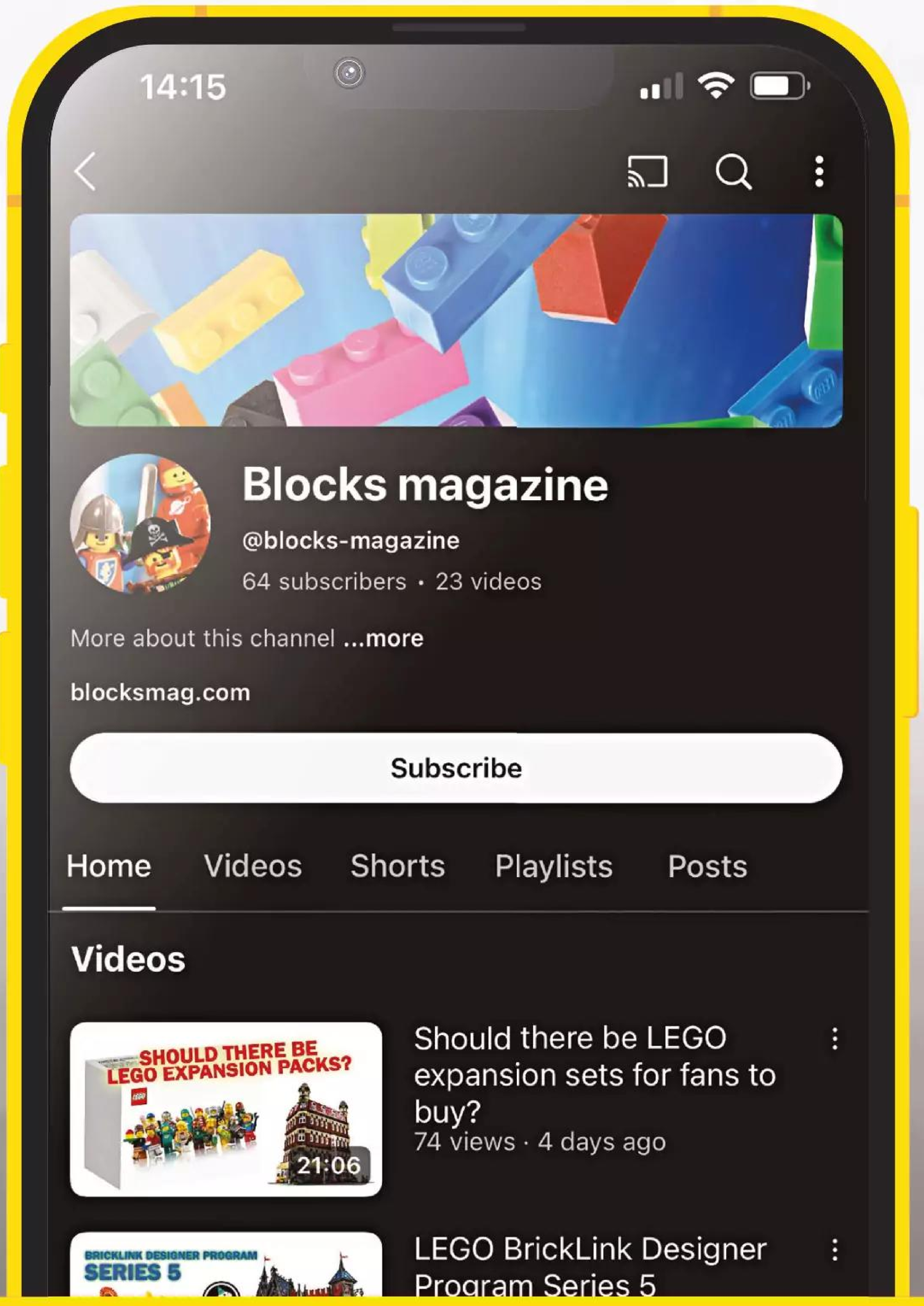

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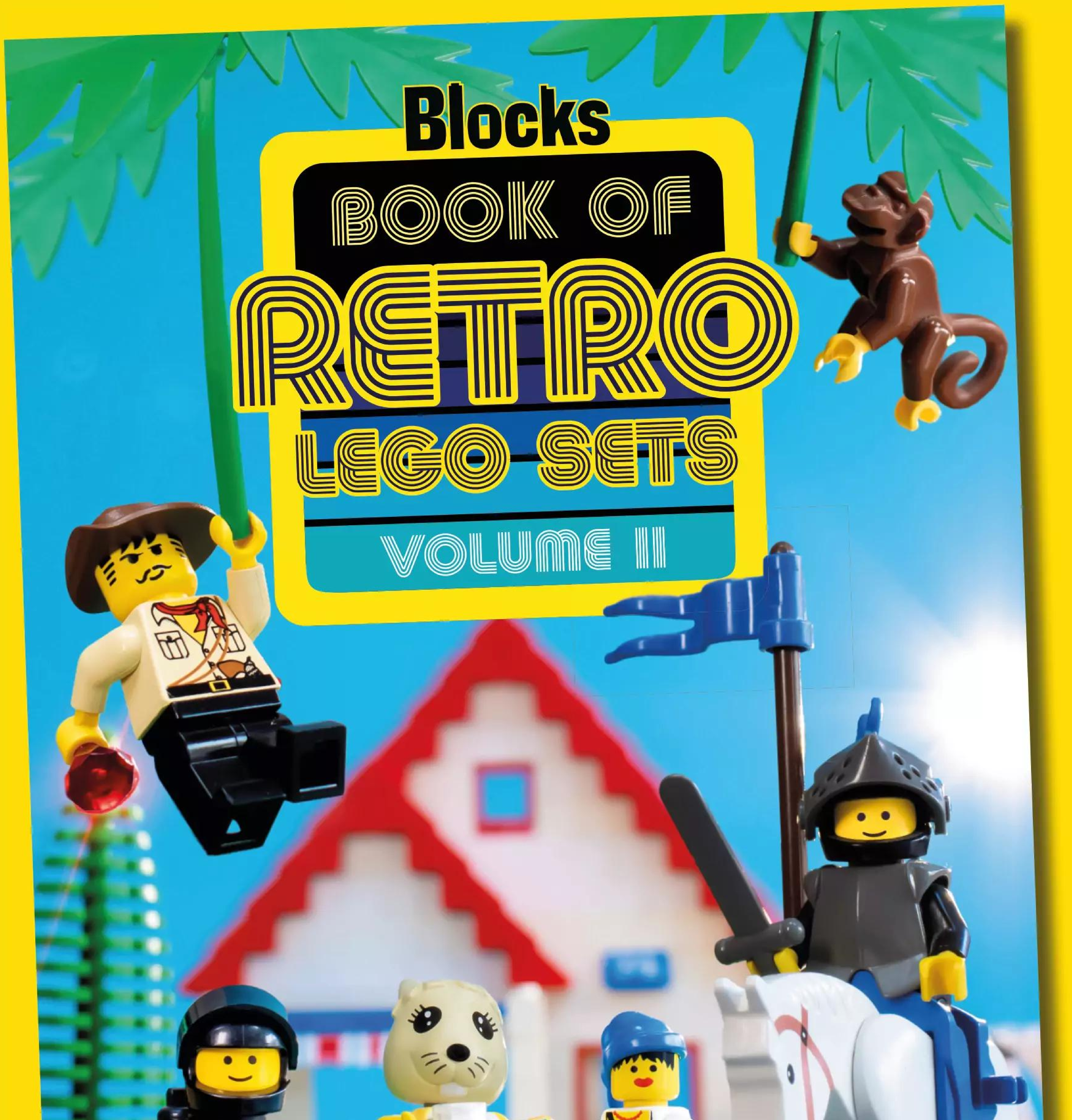
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The build is afoot

Debuting an entirely new style of LEGO set, Designer Master Antica Bracanov and her colleagues reveal the mysteries within 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook

Words: *Graham E. Hancock*

BAKER STREET

***Right:** Graphic Designer Johanna W. Jensen, Design Master Antica Bracanov and Graphic Designer Crisy Dyment.*

***Below:** The book nook is designed to be displayed nestled between your books.*

Guinness World Records lists Sherlock Holmes as the most portrayed human literary character in film and television history. No self-respecting fictional protagonist can lay claim to such an accolade without being portrayed in the most prestigious way of all; as a LEGO minifigure (no, the unnamed detective from Collectible Minifigures Series 5 does not count).

Typically, LEGO sets depict characters who exist in visual media like cinema, television or video games. In the case of 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook though, it had to be someone whose primary medium is the written word.

"This model actually came from something that we call the Creative Boost," says Design Master Antica Bracanov. "BrickHeadz came out of there, so did [10329] Tiny Plants and Brick Sketches." It's a week of the year when LEGO designers are not troubled by administrative work and are free to pursue entirely creative, open-ended ideas – then pitch them. Antica took the opportunity to develop the notion of a brick-built book nook.

"It's something that's very close to my heart, it's a passion project of mine," she continues. "I worked on it with a few other colleagues. We were thinking about a very iconic franchise from books that would get everybody into this idea, so Sherlock Holmes made sense. The first model was similar to this one and everybody from the organisation was like, 'oh wow, this is interesting – let's explore that further.' I'm so happy that it got picked up."

THE CONCEPT

Many products are driven by consumer research identifying a need, but this was a pure concept from the design team. Bookends are a classic item that bibliophiles use to stop their rows of books from slanting, but book nooks take the passion for literature a step further – they portray small scenes in a similar way to a doll house, then slot between the tomes. When you admire your books, you can peek inside to admire the miniature world and your shelf of books is imbued with life.

It makes perfect sense that the concept would work in LEGO elements. Once Antica and her colleagues had conveyed the idea of book nooks through their rough sketch models, it was time to refine those builds to something that could be an actual LEGO product.

"Now when I look back at it, the size was just ridiculous," says Antica, referring to her earliest concept model. "It was a bit taller, it was narrower, the buildings were just straight and the opening was a bit different. We figured out what size it should be, so I was trying to find out the average book size so it can go with majority of books and fit most people's bookshelves.

"Of course we were talking what we wanted to have inside. We decided that it would be nice to kind of tilt the streets so when you look in you have that perspective, you can see the walls of the buildings." That tilt

Left: *The design team included many references to Sherlock Holmes stories.*

Right: *Smooth sides ensure that studs won't damage your books.*

Far right: *Model Designer François Zapf came up with the silhouette for the 'cover'.*

Bottom left: *The set is designed so that you build each side separately and then connect them.*

Bottom centre: *Turning the shopfront reveals a secret.*

Bottom right: *The clue is a dog biscuit…*

serves two purposes; it means that more of the model is visible when you peek inside and it also gives a sense of London's crooked, eclectic streets.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Working from a book rather than a visual story provided a uniquely exciting opportunity; the setting and characters could be imagined based upon the written word.

"You read the description of a street and think, 'oh, I can put it this way,'" Antica enthuses. "Then if you don't have very specific description, it gives you a lot of freedom. There was a chapter that was describing a figure waiting for Sherlock across the street. That made me want to have two buildings across from each other. You can see through the window there's a little figure in there."

The subtle hint of a person peeking through a window is one thing, but the designer also decided that a villainous character should be lurking amidst the smog. "Once we knew that we would hide Moriarty in one of the buildings, we accommodated a little bit more space in the streets so he can fit. We tried to make it this cosy thing but also offer enough of the scenery."

A typical book nook is to be admired, but generally not to be fiddled with. When it is constructed from LEGO bricks though, it would be a shame not to imbue it with play. Incorporating a villain into the set provides the perfect opportunity for a bit of deception. "You have these two chimneys that do not look suspicious… one of them actually opens the door and Moriarty is hiding in there."

"How do you represent reptilian fashion when you have to design a character that should be evil?" says Graphic Designer Johanna W. Jensen. "The book said that he would make 'a grand minister.' So just this look felt like something that would work for him. We wanted to include the monocle."

"It's a LEGO model. You want it to be as tactile as possible," says Antica, who included more than an ingenious hidden door for Moriarty. "You want everybody to play with it, you want everybody to come closer. We

"It's something that's very close to my heart, it's a passion project."

BAKER STREET

BAKER STREET

still wanted the model to have some sort of interior. You can't place the figures inside, but you still do have that extra layer that you can peek into."

There are several sections of the model that open up to reveal subtle interiors behind the facades. "It's a mystery, people can explore all of the little bits and pieces. We have a lot of areas where we hid really fun decorations with a lot of easter eggs."

PRACTICALITIES

To make it possible to access these areas, the model designer incorporated hinges. When you slide the set out from your bookshelf, you can open it up so that it presents a flat street scene. This is how you can expose Moriarty and explore the other nooks and crannies that give the location a sense of mystery. You can turn the bookshop window to reveal a nod to a famous case, you can peek inside the detective's apartment to see his work and even open the ground floor door to expose his coat rack.

"One of the challenges was to make everything sturdy," says Antica. "It was important to anticipate how people are going to handle it. I pick it up like this, but then maybe someone's going to want to pick up here. But you can't actually squeeze it because it has been well locked. A lot of time went into figuring out how to make sure that the thin walls are actually very sturdy walls.

"There is a beautiful decorative arch. But it also serves to stop the sides from bending. There was a lot of discussion about stability."

As LEGO Icons introduces new types of builds, as the theme continues to go way beyond the typical format of minifigure scale buildings and vehicles, it catches the attention of the uninitiated. Such models can't

ELEMENTARY BOOK SHOP
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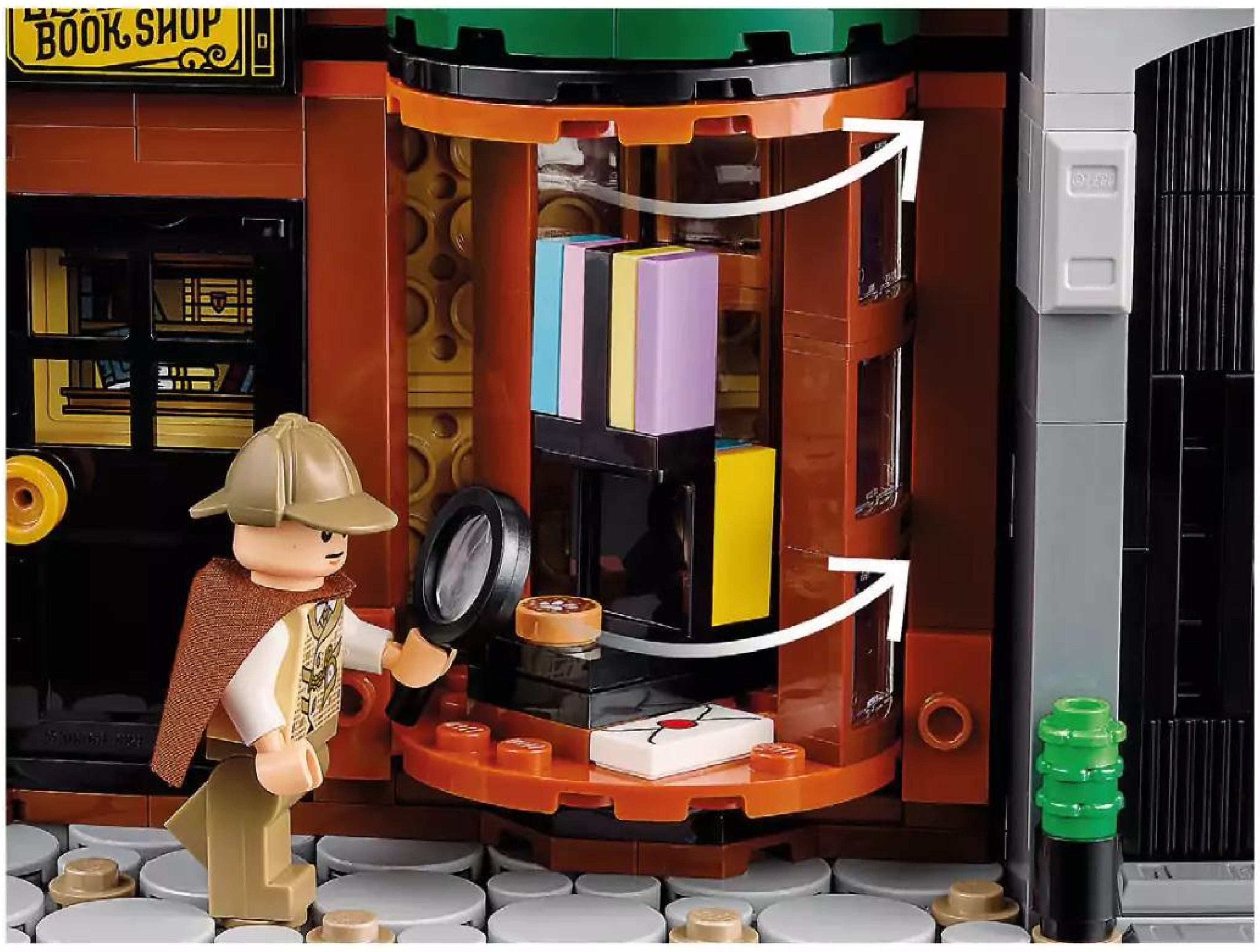


LONDON BRICKLY
MORIARTY DISAPPEARS!

> “You want everybody to play with it, you want everybody to come closer.”

push the complexity too far as those new builders need their first step into the System to be an achievable one.

“From a design point of view, someone has to build this model at some point, so the building experience has to be interesting and fun and easy. Because I think a lot of people who don’t have a lot of building experience might pick the set up and it has to be something that makes them want to build another set after that.”

SHERLOCK DETAILS

For the designers, one of the joyful aspects of the process was collaborating on the details. “There are a lot of decorations,” says Antica. “I would build something, I would need something for a space, then Crisy and Johanna would know what to put there.”

“We are all huge fans of book,” says Johanna. “We tried to include different stories. It was so great that we had to base it on something that’s written, because we could take a lot of creative liberty in how we represent different things, how we imagine they could be.”

“We spent a lot of time reading,” adds Graphic Designer Crisy Dyment. “We started with easter eggs based on things that we most remembered, Reichenbach Falls for The Final Problem, Irene’s photograph, things like that. Having the message board in the apartment, we could hide a lot of little items. If you’re a fan, you’ll see things and think, ‘oh I remember that from that one story.’”

“Yeah, we had way too many ideas,” laughs Antica. “Way more than we could actually put in the model.”

“Our Teams chat was just blowing up every day with ideas,” Crisy agrees.

“For Irene, we have designed a full new torso and new skirt component,” says Johanna. “She is the coolest character. She gives him a coin that he keeps with his pocket watch. That’s also one of the reasons we chose to have the pocket watch on him.”

An aspect of the model that is very graphically thought out, but isn’t a decoration, is the book ‘cover’. The edges of the nook that frame the scene mimic a book, with the illusion of a few pages on either side. To further this idea, the book nook has a cover featuring a silhouette of Sherlock Holmes that is constructed using tiles.

“My first concept could not be more different in the way it was built,” says Antica. “I had that built with bricks, studs up. It was tedious to do it that way.

“You can see that this icon silhouette of Sherlock has smooth edges. When you put the nook on your shelf, you don’t want to damage your books, so we wanted to make sure that everything is nice and smooth. We were trying to predict how people would use it, where they would put it, how they would interact with it.”

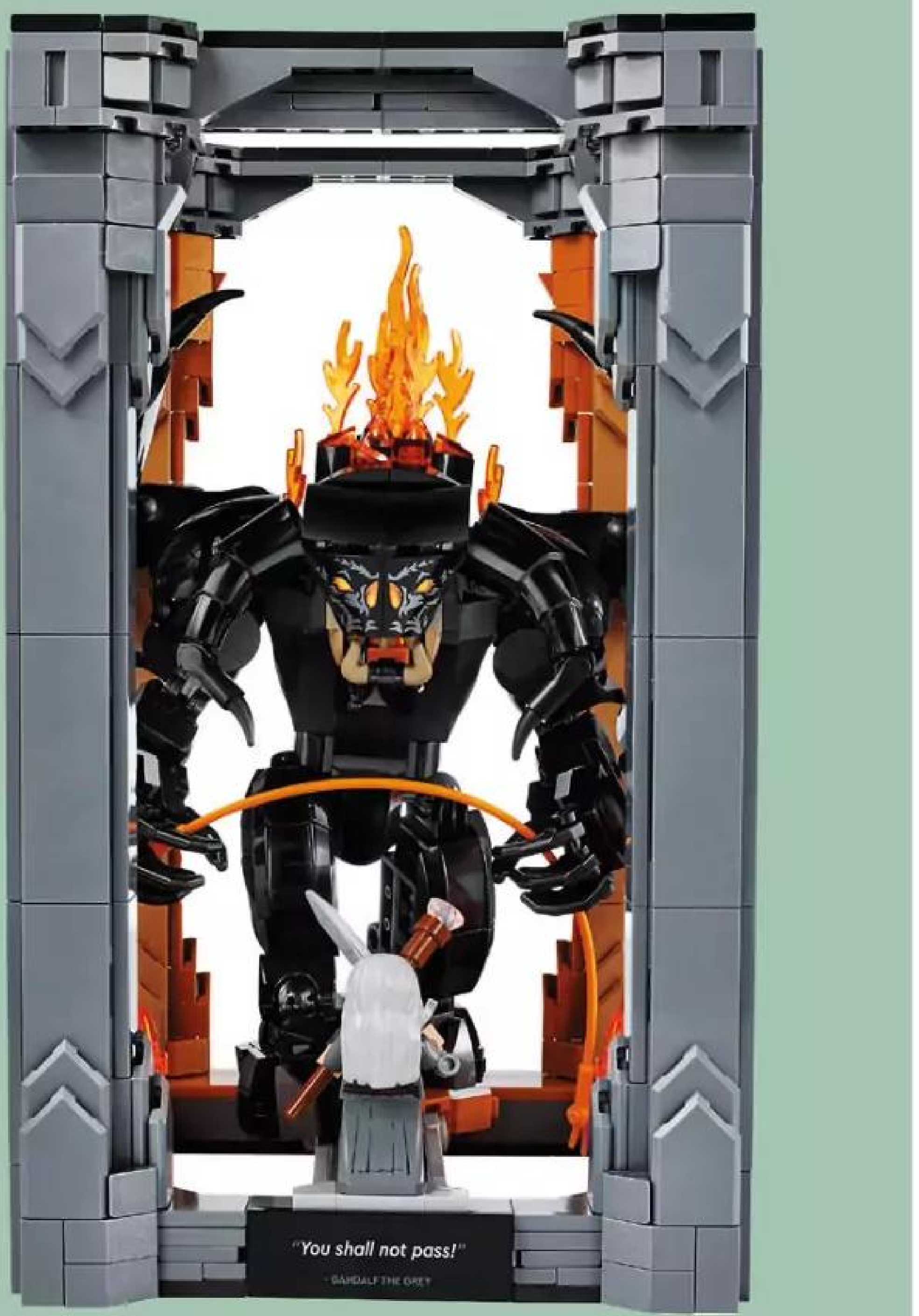
This isn’t the only book nook to have launched as a result of the concept that originated in the Creative Boost. 10367 The Lord of the Rings: Balrog Book Nook is a slightly different size and concept. “The size of each was influenced by different things. We were working side by side on these, so at some point we thought, ‘can we try to make them similar in size?’ But we realised that it was just not possible, because the other one needed to accommodate a completely different story and a creature that takes up a lot of space. If we had made this one that size, at some point it would stop looking cosy. The width of them this is the same, the depth is almost the same, the other one is just slightly taller.”

Just like the stories they are based on, each book nook is unique and reflects the idiosyncrasies of the source material. 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook is a model that includes red herrings, dog biscuits and a massive magnifying glass. Appropriately for this particular character and world, this is not presented in the standard LEGO set format… but if you are of a curious disposition, if you crave for mental exaltation, then the build is afoot.

LONDON
RACHE

BALROG BOOK NOOK

The Lord of the Rings also has a new Icons set in this format

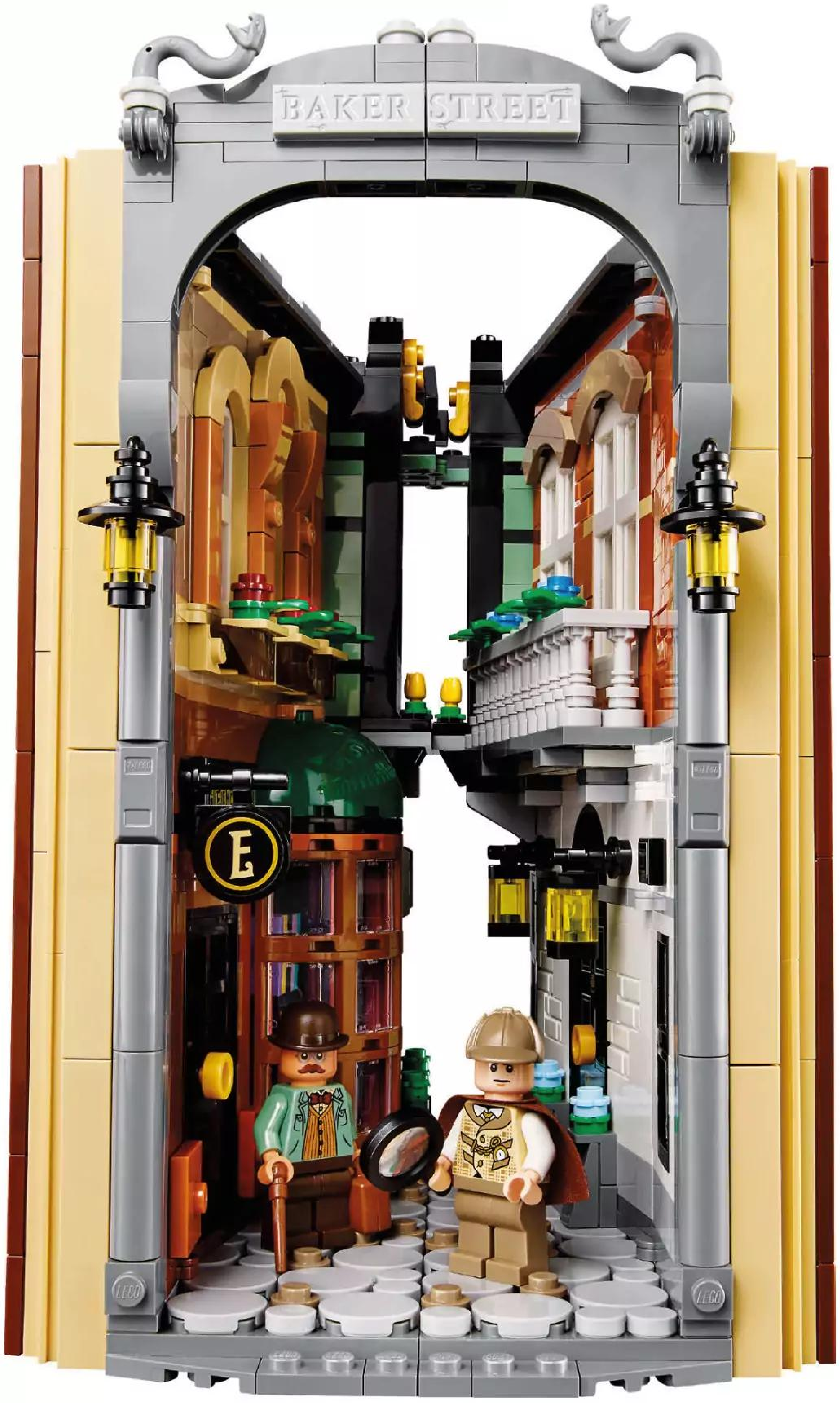


Model Designer François Zapf worked on 10367 The Lord of the Rings: Balrog Book Nook, one of three book nooks that have launched the new format.

"You probably recognise the specific scene from the movie," says François. "It's the fight on the bridge between Gandalf and the Balrog. There are not as many functions as the other one, but you can detach Gandalf on his stand so you have the broken bridge. You can actually remove the Balrog and it's all brick built, fully articulated and everything."

That means that the beast can be displayed within the book nook or can be added to your other The Lord of the Rings sets. Most of the bricks are used for the Balrog, with a smaller number going to the frame that surrounds it.

"We've brought back these wing elements from the Fell Beast after many arguments in the design department," said Graphic Designer Nathan Davis. "They actually have very similar wings – I was wrong! For the face we have a print with some glowing eyes, some flames coming from his mouth via brick form, some flames in his nostrils and we have some titanium ink on there to give him a bit of a leathery, rocky lava feel."



Far left: *The set includes Watson, a newsie, Sherlock Holmes, Moriarty and Irene.*

Left: *The model provides a peek into a London street.*

Bottom row, left to right: *A section opens to reveal Sherlock's apartment.*

The design team included many references to beloved Sherlock Holmes stories.

The villainous Moriarty is lurking in a doorway.

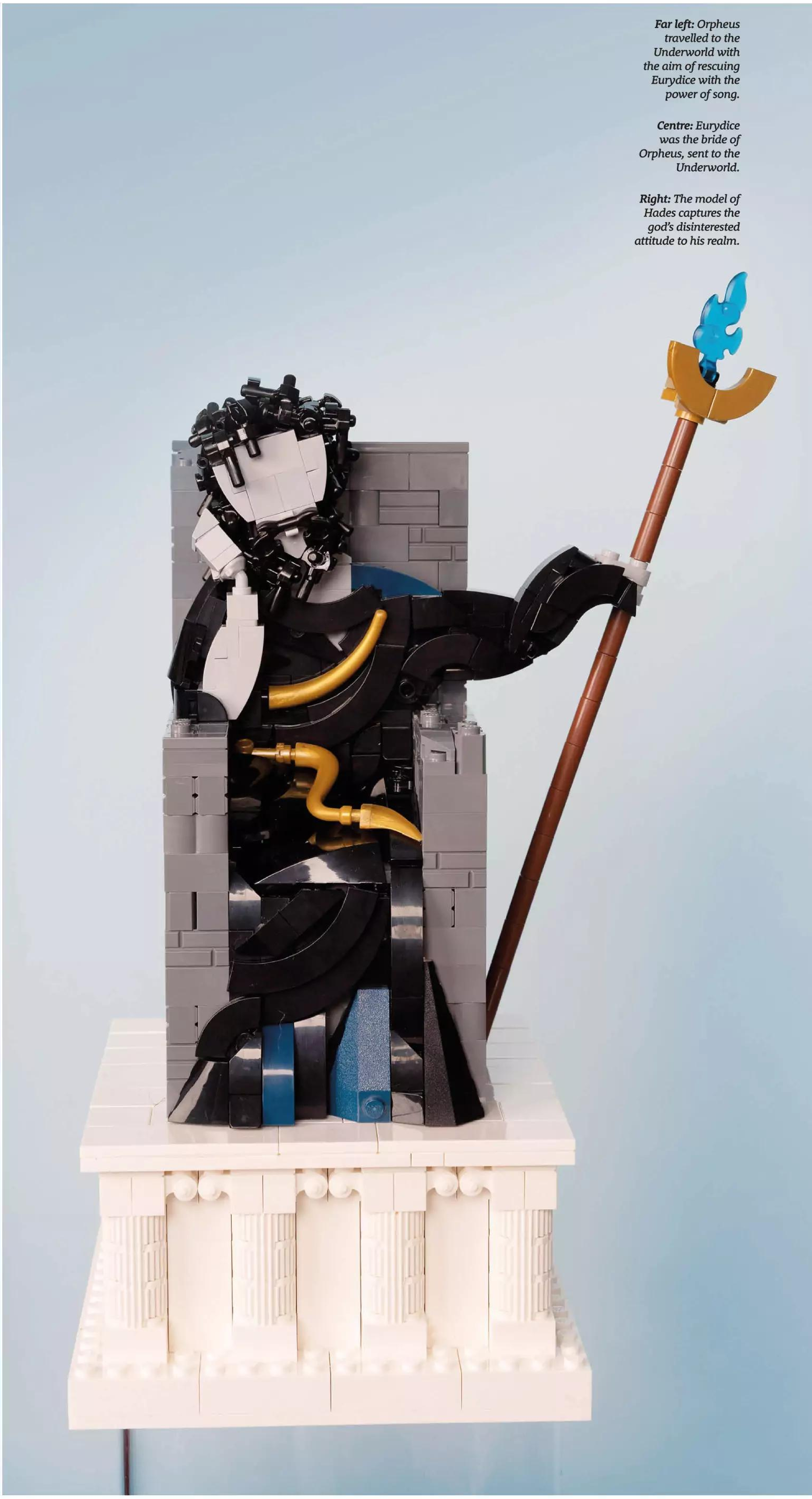
Arthur Conan Doyle created the character of Sherlock Holmes.

Sherlock is equipped to investigate his latest case.

MYTHOLOGY THROUGH BRICKS

LEGO bricks give dimension to ancient mythology in a new museum exhibition that marks 200 years since a significant historical discovery

Words: *George Chrysostomou*



Far left: *Orpheus travelled to the Underworld with the aim of rescuing Eurydice with the power of song.*

Centre: *Eurydice was the bride of Orpheus, sent to the Underworld.*

Right: *The model of Hades captures the god's disinterested attitude to his realm.*

Engaging the next generation with history isn't the easiest challenge to overcome. Britain's many quality museums are constantly innovating and looking for innovative methods to get guests through the door, to experience those all-important, human stories in new and exciting ways. You have likely seen some of those unusual ideas firsthand, as interactive displays and technological tools are used in tandem to appeal to a modern audience.

But one museum, in Cirencester, Gloucestershire, has created an altogether different exhibition that taps into a classic tool that everyone is very familiar with. The Corinium Museum, which prides itself on aiding its guests in discovering England's archaeological heritage, teamed up with Barn Theatre and New Brewery Arts for Project Orpheus.

The concept was simple – to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the discovery of the Orpheus Mosaic. It was uncovered at Barton Farm, just outside Cirencester. It shows Orpheus in the centre playing his lyre or cithara, soothing the wild beasts around him. The museum is marking the occasion with a one-of-a-kind trail made completely from LEGO elements, which goes by the name of Brickus Orpheus.

THE INITIAL IDEA

When plans were first being put in place to celebrate this landmark anniversary, the team at the Corinium Museum looked to old ideas for inspiration.

"We have wanted to create a trail using LEGO bricks for many years but, as a local museum owned by the local council, we never had the budget in our normal running costs," says Emma Stuart, the Museum Director. "We needed to find a funded project such as Project Orpheus where we could allocate money towards it.

"We had visited the Brick History exhibition in nearby Gloucester Museum and factored Warren Elsmore, the professional LEGO builder, into our tender process once we knew our National Lottery Heritage Fund bid had been successful."

With funding in tow, the team set about defining their goals, what they wanted the project to achieve, and ultimately how they envisioned the trail coming together. While it's not evident considering the quality of the exhibition, this is the Corinium Museum's very first foray into using LEGO bricks in this capacity.

"We run regular children's trails around the museum, usually based on children's books, items from our collection or themes, but this is the first big trail made from LEGO bricks we have run," Emma explains. "We wanted to engage with people who absolutely love LEGO bricks and commission sculptures relating to our collection to bring the two together – merging creativity with archaeology and mythology. We wanted to attract families and also LEGO enthusiasts to enjoy the trail and enjoy the museum collections."

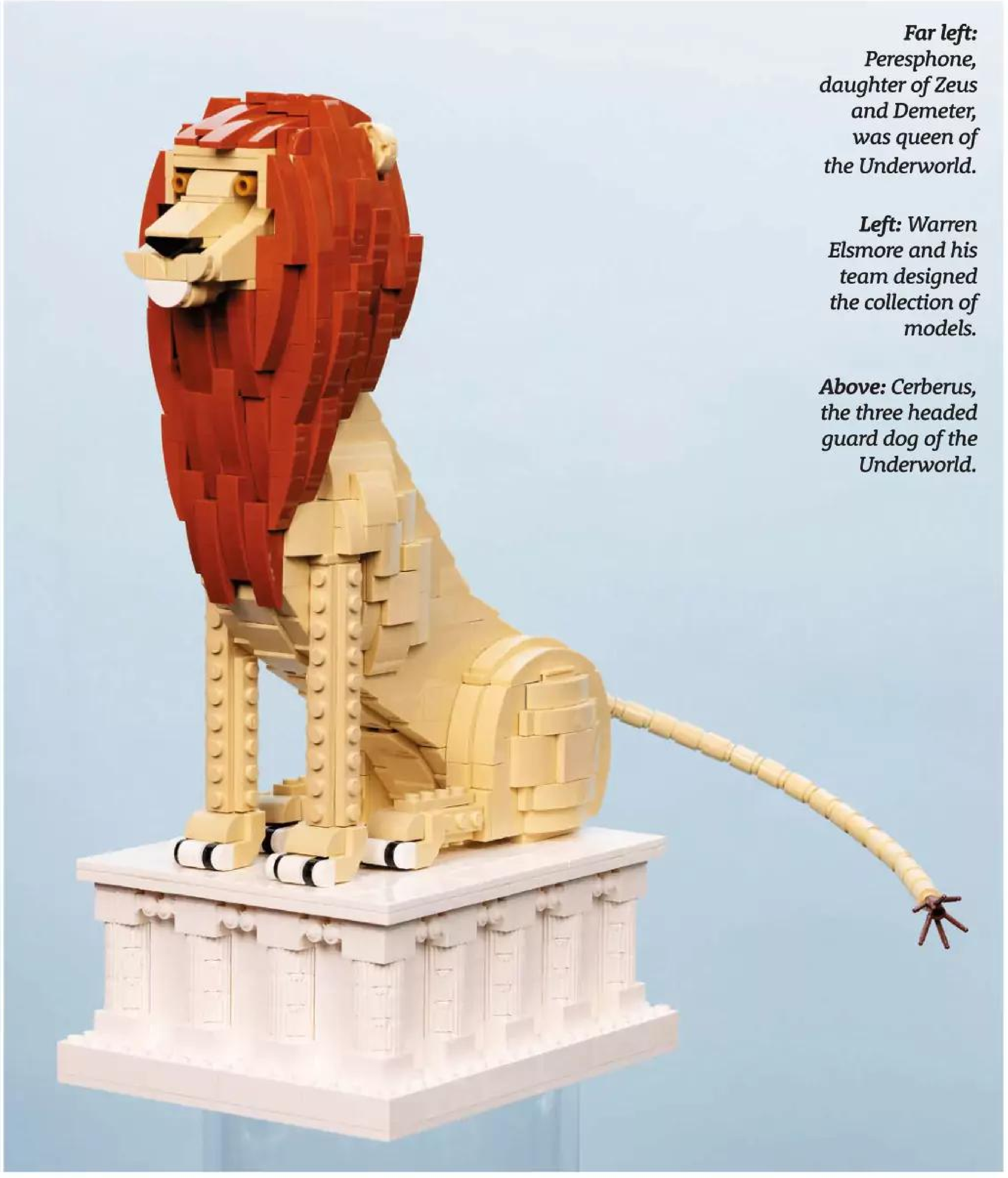
With that in mind, the museum then moved to recruit a talented designer into the mix, who could bring some guidance, experience and structure to this ambitious attempt.

ENTER WARREN ELSMORE

Warren Elsmore brands himself as an artist, whose canvas is the LEGO brick. Author of Brick City and an expert at large scale creations, Warren has worked with hundreds of clients over the years to develop moving exhibitions, mosaics, big builds and event displays. Many of the touring expos he has contributed to have an historical edge, including Brick Dinos, Brick History and Brick Wonders. He was the obvious person for the Corinium Museum to reach out to.

"I was lucky enough to 'go pro' back in 2012, when I did a project for the LEGO Group and the Danish tourist board that was displayed as part of the London Olympic Games," he says. "That seems like a very long time ago now!

"At the time I had my first LEGO book deal and, if I'm honest, I was very bored with work as an IT consultant. Apparently my resignation wasn't a surprise."



Far left: *Peresphone, daughter of Zeus and Demeter, was queen of the Underworld.*

Left: *Warren Elsmore and his team designed the collection of models.*

Above: *Cerberus, the three headed guard dog of the Underworld.*

This passion and hobby dates back to Warren's younger years, although it's a more recent experience that reignited his interest in the medium. "I don't remember many of my builds from my childhood, but my first major build as an adult was a GNER 225; the high speed trains that run from Edinburgh to London. It's pretty basic by today's standards. It did lead me to build a six metre long Forth Bridge to run it across though. Sadly the bridge is lost to time, but the train still lives on in a box somewhere. I can't really bear to part it out."

With such a wealth of knowledge to tap into, Corinium Museum made tentative steps to pitch their vision to the creator and his team. "We were first approached back in 2024, just before Christmas," he recalls. "The Corinium Museum wanted to put together a trail to lead people around their museum. LEGO models seemed like a great way to do that and be a little different."

His reaction was positive, which then drove the collaboration. "My first thoughts were that it sounded like a really interesting project. The museum didn't want to create LEGO models just because they are made from LEGO bricks, but because they hoped they would open up the museum to a new audience.

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with building for its own sake, of course – that's what I do in my spare time. But when it's public money that's being spent it's good to have a clear idea of what the LEGO models should do." Thus, the process began in earnest and the trail began to take shape.

PAVING THE TRAIL

The mythical trail of people, gods, goddesses and animals, which takes inspiration from the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the former's journey through the Underworld, is packed full of narrative potential. The story is a tragedy, one that has been retold many times. In fact, Hadestown is currently experiencing a phenomenal run on the West End as an alternative telling of this tale.

Emma and the team were clear about their historical influences. "The largest known Orpheus mosaic floor is only 10 miles away from the town and is thought to have decorated the floor of a Roman palatial villa," she says. "To inspire younger children, we wanted to focus on the animals in the mosaic and in the Greek and Roman myths, with a leopard, lion and peacock but also a mythical three-headed dog called Cerberus. Characters were chosen from Greek and Roman mythology.

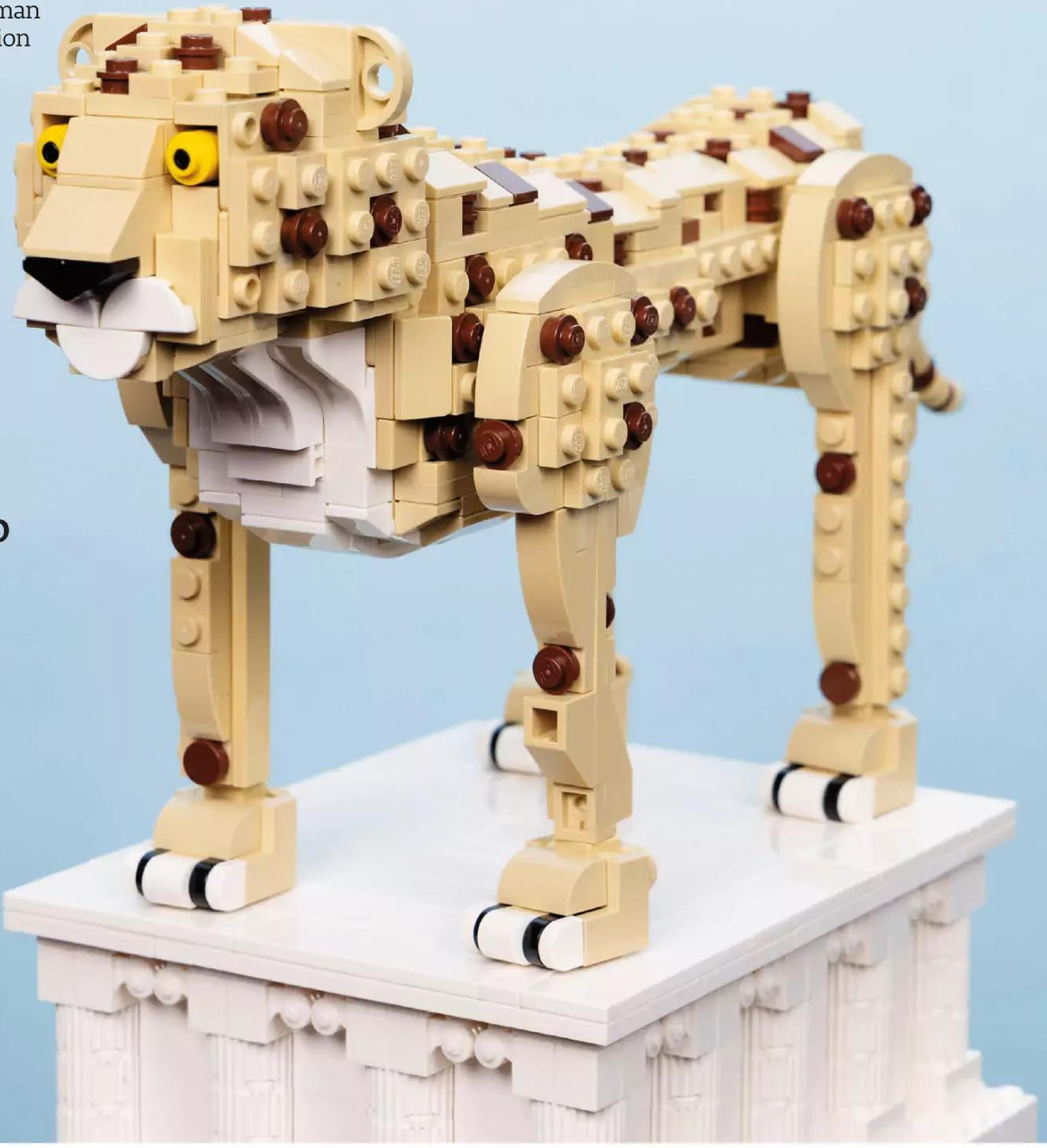
"The museum has wonderful sculptures of the Roman pantheon and we wanted to complement this collection by including Hades/Pluto and his wife, Persephone/Proserpina. The collections wouldn't be complete without Orpheus, with his Phrygian cap and flowing cape, together with his wife, Euridice."

That's a lot of models to include, so Warren started the design process as he always does, by consulting with the museum. "There are obviously lots of different ways you can build a LEGO model – studs up, studs out, detailed, et cetera – so I wanted to make sure that the models we built were what the museum expected. By showing them some examples, we came up with a look and feel that would work for all of the figures.

"Quite early in this project, I realised that we'd need something to bring all the models together, so I came up with the idea of putting them all on LEGO plinths. That not only visually ties them together, but structurally as well."

Warren began putting together the visual renderings, with a mixture of digital and physical design techniques. Working from a studio with a great many resources, the designer often finds that conceptualising models the old-fashioned way can sometimes be simpler than using digital tools.

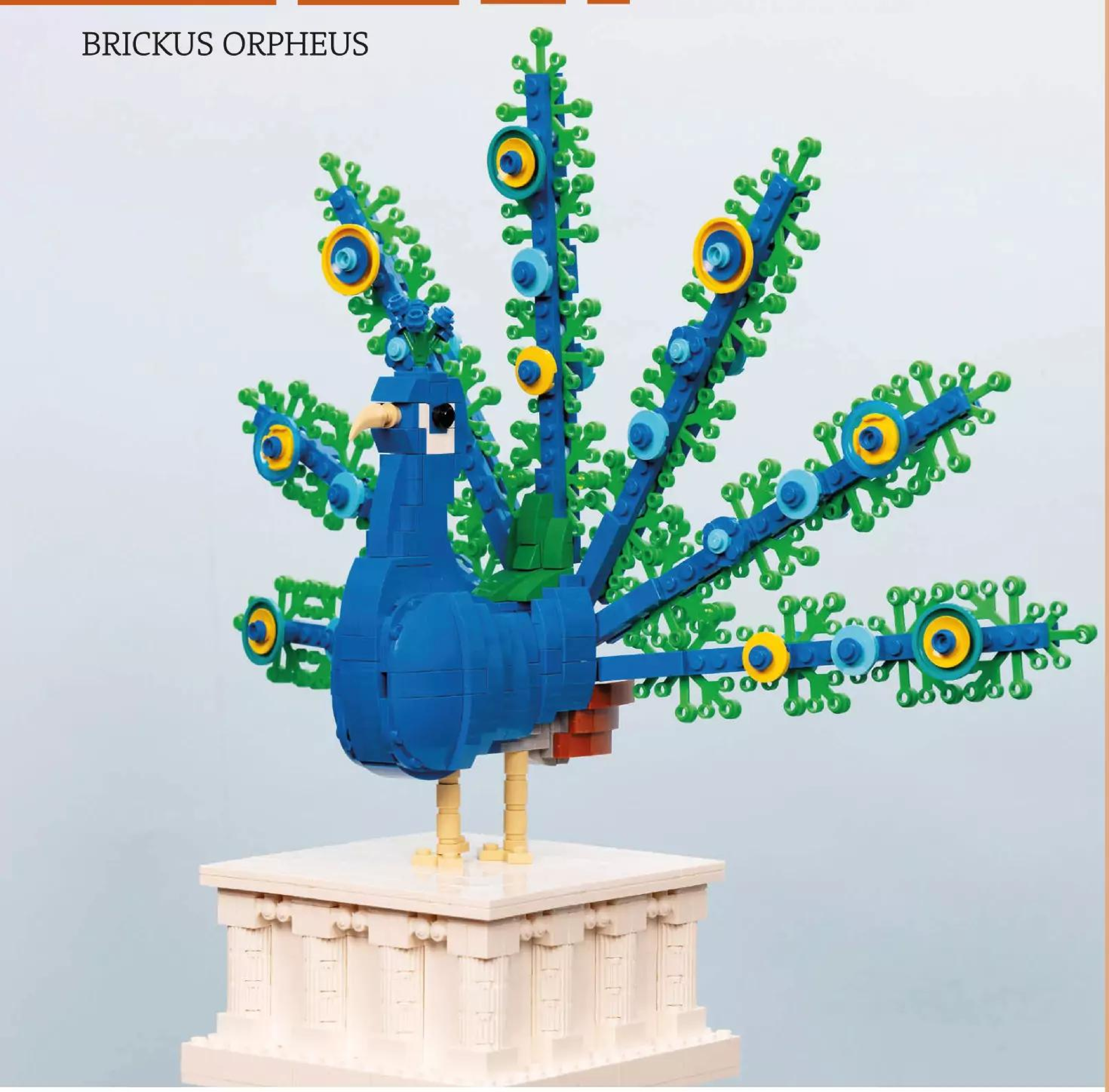
Once the prototypes are signed off, the final models can be built and glued. When you are creating models intended for public display, you have to bind them together.



"We wanted to commission sculptures relating to our collection to bring the two together."

***Above:** Several of the models designed for the collection are based on beasts that feature on the Orpheus Mosaic.*

***Right:** The intricate builds use complicated SNOT techniques to achieve the accurate shaping.*



Above: *Leaf elements are used in the peacock's feathers.*

Above right: The Orpheus Mosaic was uncovered 200 years ago.

Right: The LEGO models have been placed alongside the museum's displays.

Bottom right: The Corinium Museum is located in Cirencester.

"It's not actually a glue that we use, but a chemical solvent," he says. "It literally melts the bricks together. That means you have to be very, very careful applying it! Anywhere the solvent touches a brick, it will dissolve it. Because of the sheer amount of SNOT work in these models they were some of the hardest I've had to glue.

"Not only are there studs in every usual direction, there are also angled sections and angles on angles. They are also made of many tiny parts with very small areas to apply the glue to. Once they are finished of course, you can't see any of that."

In total, the process took around three months, but the building itself was tracked across a few weeks. Each figure contains around 400 to 500 bricks, with around 100 going straight into the base. While Brickus Orpheus was ultimately a smaller project than what Warren might usually work on, there was no shortage of passion and skill that went into creating these characters. Projects like this require many hands, so Warren drafted in Naomi Crawshaw and Thorin Finch to work on the builds with him.

EXPERIENCING THE STORY

Of course, now that the trail is up and running, visitors can see these incredible characters and models up close.

"We wanted to make sure that all the human-like figures were different in some way. So the postures and in the case of Hades, his throne, really add something to it," says Warren, whose favourite builds are Eurydice and Hades.

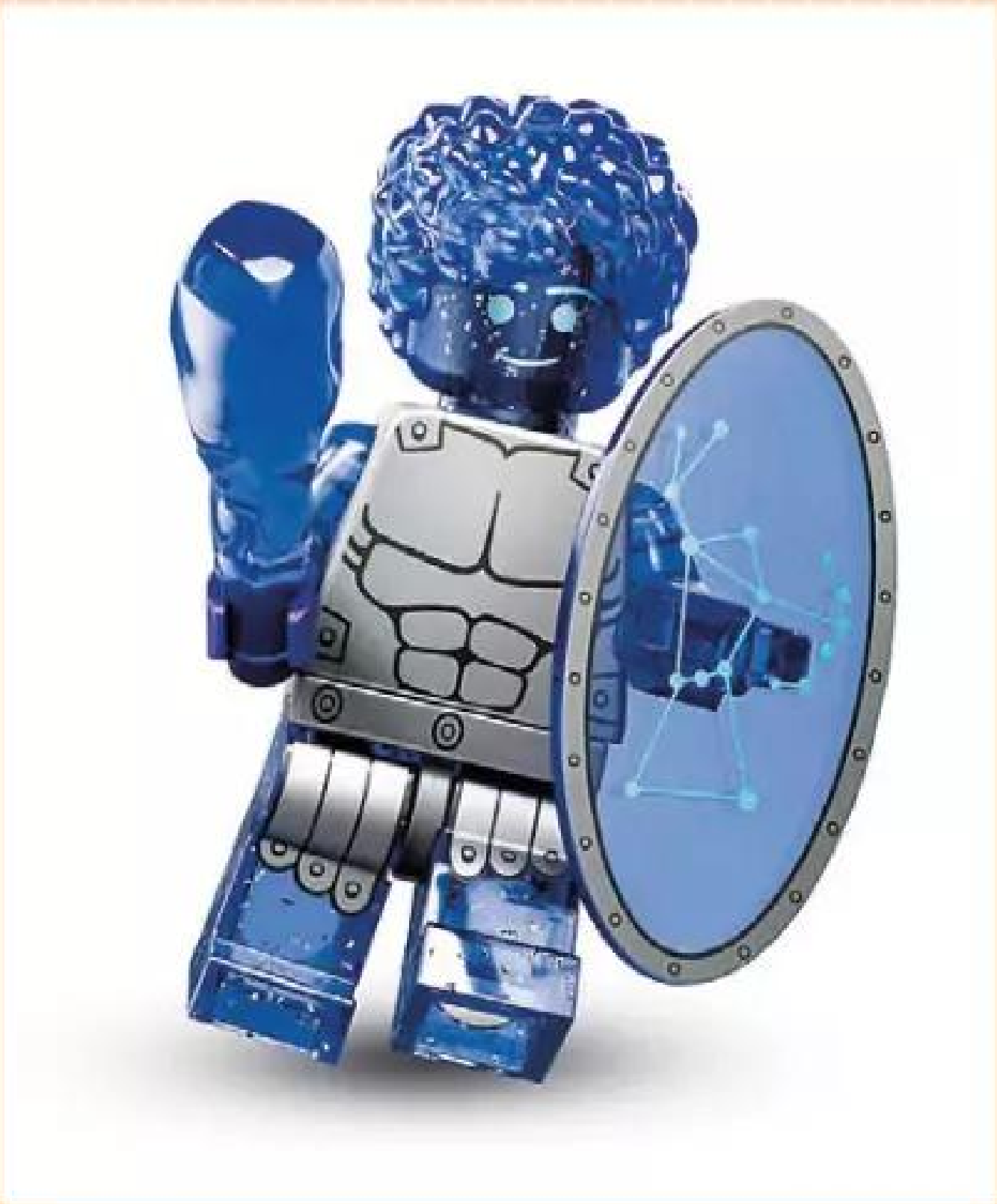
"With the animals we decided to use a slightly different build style, which makes the designs more accessible I think. I like to think that visitors to the museum can see a model and it may inspire them to go home and try it for themselves."

Those plinths add real height and a sense of glory to each model, as the classic Greek stone structures hold the weight of these legends of old. The depth and detail that has gone into these models is even clearer when seeing them in person – the boredom of Hades slumped in his chair, contrasting well with the excitement of the three heads of the Cerberus that guards the gates to the Underworld.

From Orpheus' magnetism as a musician of great skill, to Eurydice's grace and elegance as the heroine of this tale, these LEGO models really capture the spirit of the original mythos and the story that the mosaic was telling. These intricate creations deliver a modern reimagining of a classic tale, encouraging visitors to engage with an area of history they may only have a passing familiarity with.

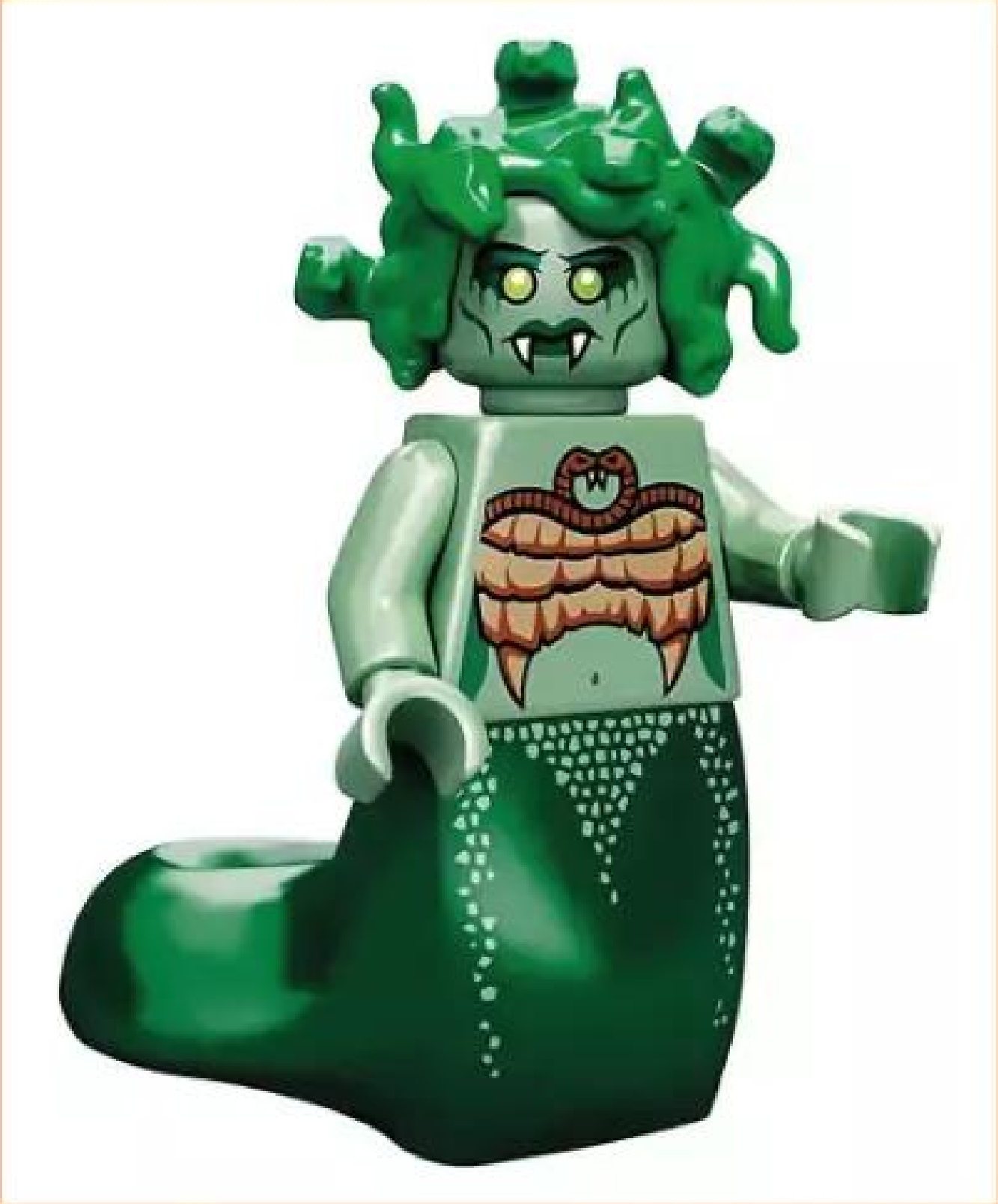
MYTHICAL MINIFIGURES

Collectible Minifigures has provided many characters from Greek mythology in the unique LEGO style



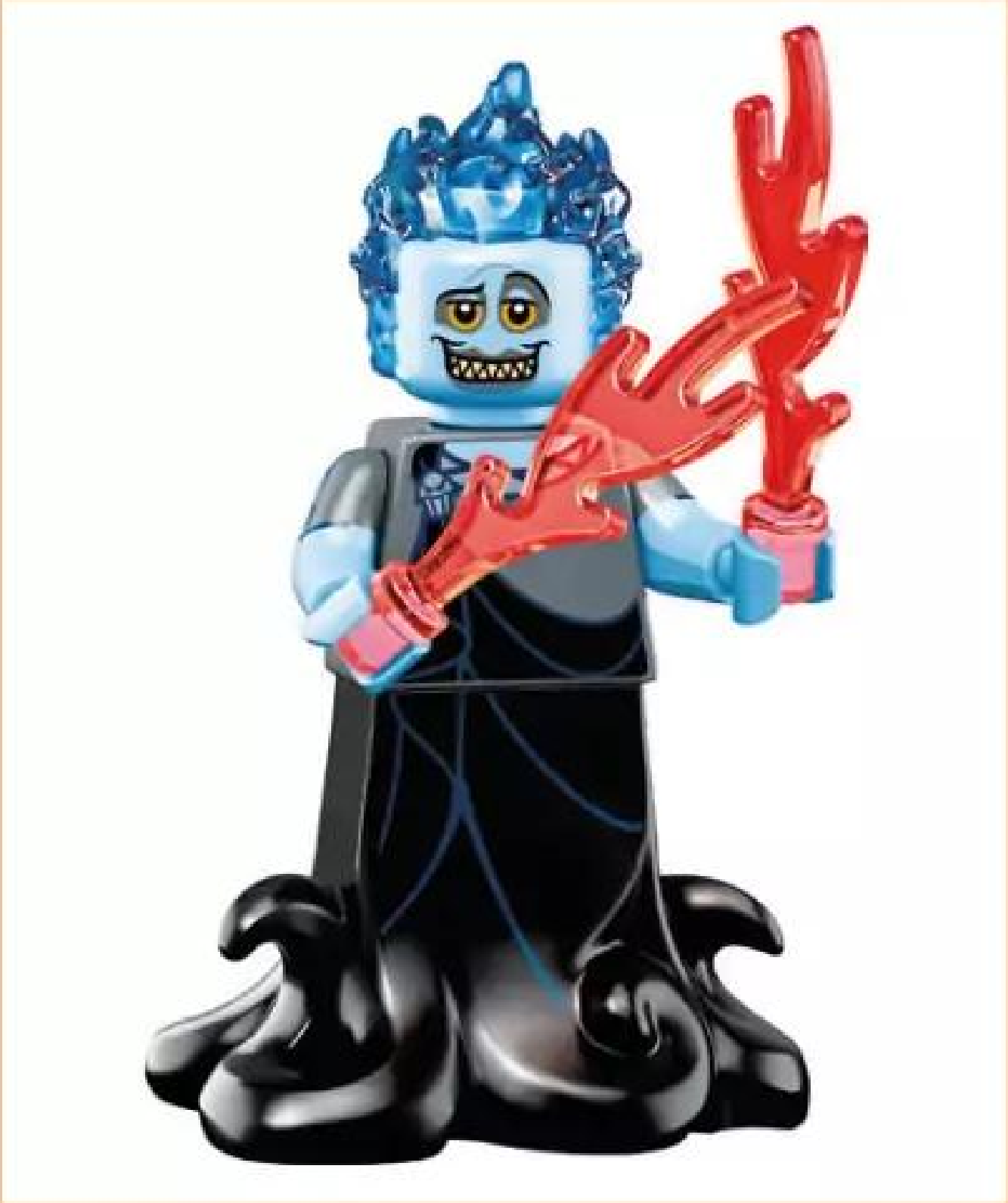
Orion

In Greek mythology, Zeus placed the giant hunter among the stars. Accordingly, Collectible Minifigures introduced the minifigure as part of the Space themed Series 26. There are stars on the character's face and the constellation is represented on the shield he holds. As with many myths, there are different stories about Orion – he is Boeotian by birth or associated with the island of Chios. In varying tales, his death has been attributed to Artemius, Apollo and a terrifying scorpion.



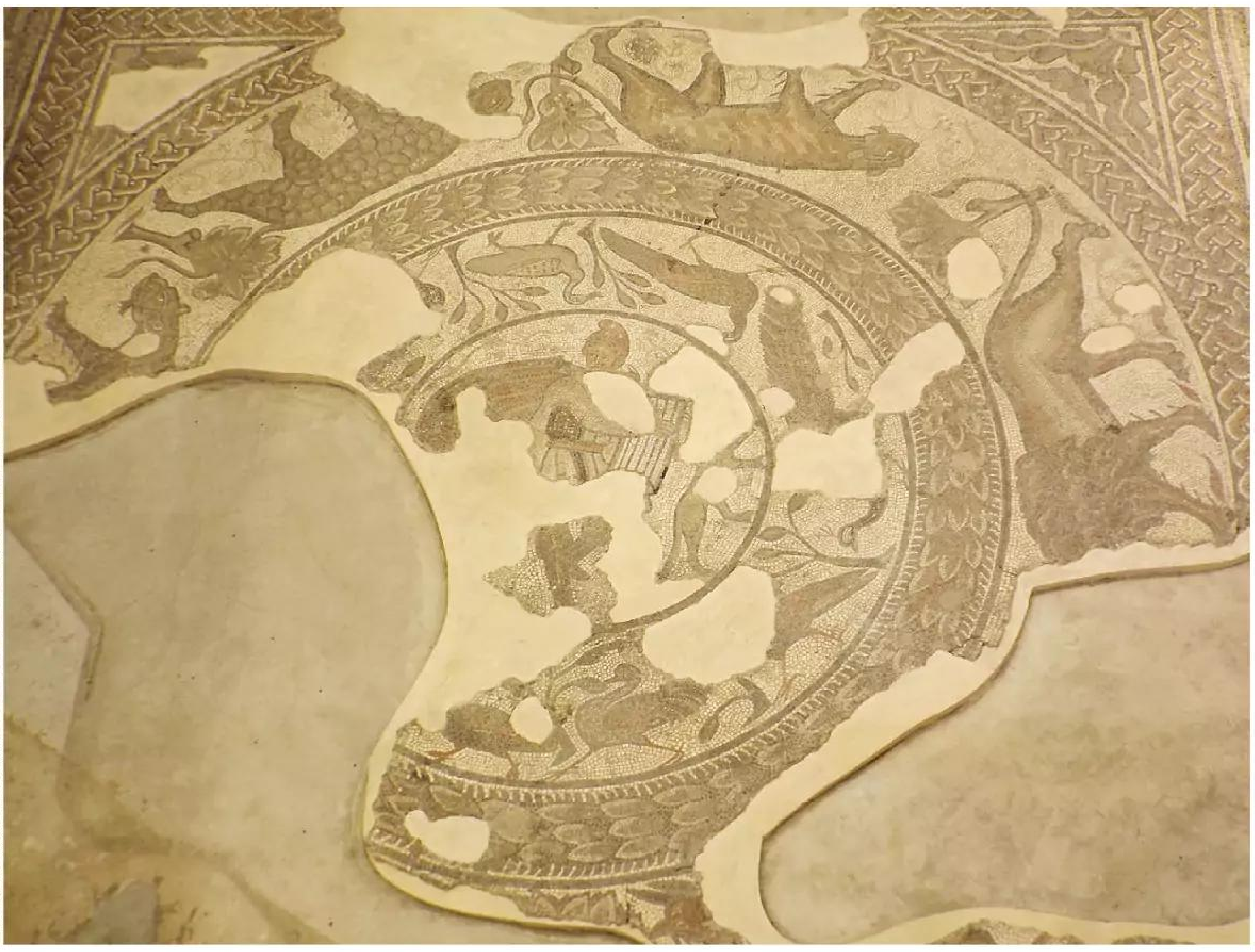
Medusa

The best-known Gorgon, Medusa is unmistakable thanks to her serpentine hair. Unlike the other Gorgons, Medusa was mortal, which is how she was able to be killed by Perseus. Her severed head could turn anyone who looked at it into stone, so it was either placed in Athena's shield or buried in the marketplace of Argos. The Series 10 minifigure plays with the snake motif, not only giving her appropriate hair but a snake-like tail too.



Hades

Represented through his appearance in the Disney adaptation of Hercules (from Disney Series 2), Hades is the son of Cronus and Rhea. He ruled over the Underworld with Persephone at his side (he abducted her so that she would become his bride – this is Greek mythology, after all), with protection from the three-headed dog Cerberus. The LEGO minifigure captures the flamboyant persona he displays in the animated feature, with a special element depicting his fiery hair.



> **"The collections wouldn't be complete without Orpheus, with his Phrygian cap and flowing cape, together with his wife, Euridice."**

ENGAGING EXHIBITS

Obviously, museums are created to gaze at the past and learn something new about what came before. But when a project like this is commissioned, it demonstrates how museums can adapt to ensure they engage the next generation.

"It has been incredibly popular with both young and not-so-young visitors," says Emma. "We have created an immersive peacock drawing to collect comments from visitors so that we can share responses and these have all been really positive so far.

"Most people are impressed with the detail in the sculptures whilst others want to know how they have been constructed. We can see that the smaller children, who may be too young yet to fully appreciate the museum artefacts, are pleased to be included in a way that is relevant for them. It's lovely to see their faces when they find a new Orpheus sculpture along the trail.

"Older children are engaged with finding answers to questions relating to the myths and to the museum collections, so we hope there is a little bit of learning along the way." This project has allowed the museum to connect with guests in a different and interactive way.

Is this something that will continue on, into the future? The Corinium Museum seems to think so and there are already plans for this ambitious project to live on past its initial run.

"We would love to continue to use LEGO bricks in our museum. It is an incredible tool that can help to engage children with history," Emma confirms. "We certainly hope that these wonderful LEGO sculptures will have a legacy beyond the trail.

"Our aspiration is to share this trail with other museums around the country to help them remain resilient and attract different and new audiences. LEGO displays open up opportunities for creative inspiration. Artefacts such as the Roman mosaics, displaying detailed geometry, as well as sculptural buildings, such as Cirencester's medieval abbey, inspire in a similar way, so there is a natural connection here to learning about the past through the creation of LEGO shapes and sculptures in the present."

It's certainly a way for a museum to stand out and given the seemingly universal love of LEGO bricks, there are sure to be many visitors to the Corinium Museum throughout 2025.

Thanks to Corinium Museum Marketing & Events Officer Samantha Fryer Ward for arranging the interviews. Brick Orpheus is running until November 2.

CORINIUM MUSEUM
CORINIUM MUSEUM

Creeper

Guard your blocks and upgrade your armour in the world of Minecraft – it's time to face the Creeper

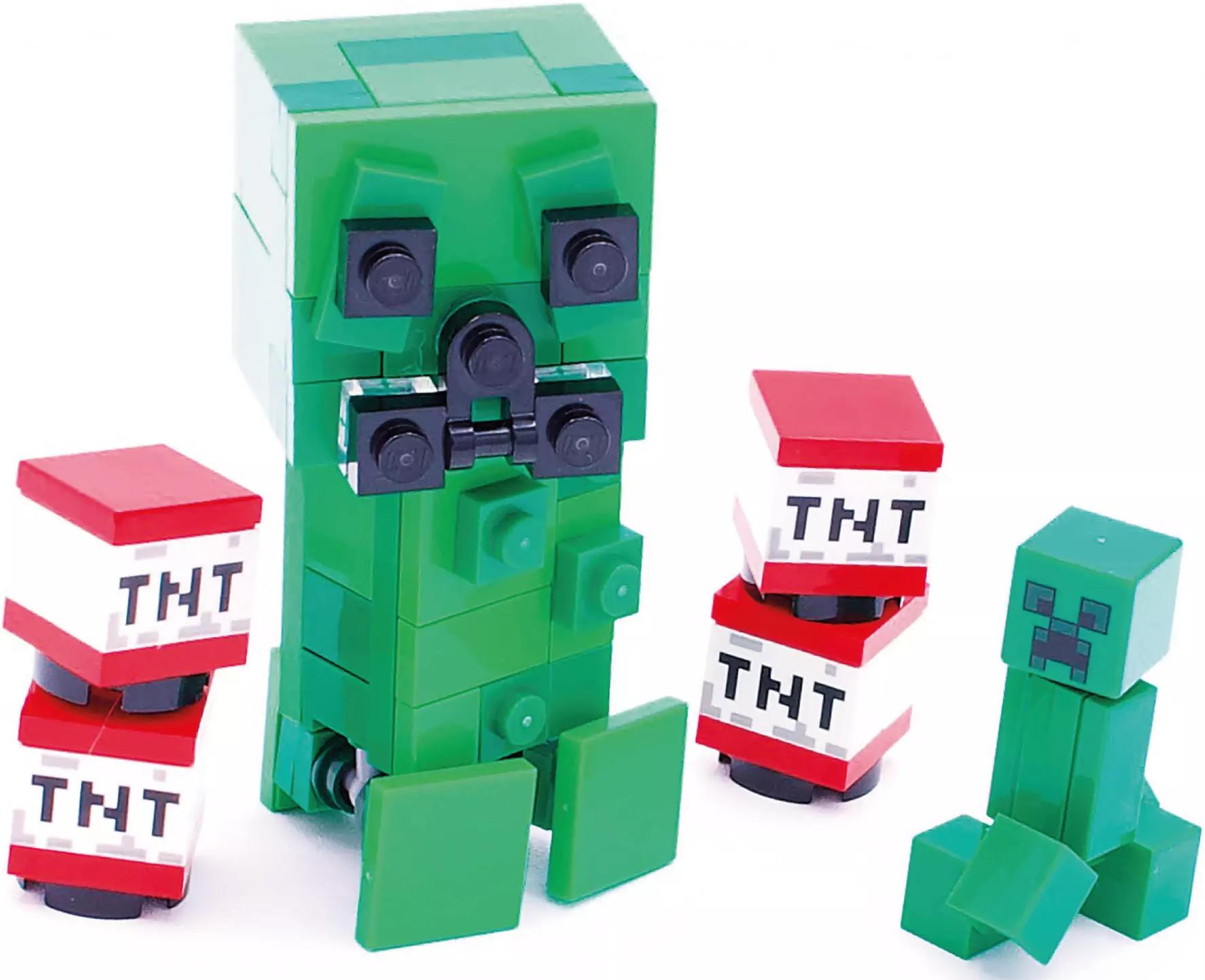
Creepers have become one of the most iconic designs in Minecraft. Even if you have never played the game, you will recognise the Creeper's blocky green form. A hostile mobile entity, or mob, they are self-destructive enemies that try to sneak up on players and then explode.

Thanks to being so iconic, Creepers have been included in LEGO Minecraft from its earliest incarnation – in minifigure form, as a BrickHeadz character and now as a big model in 21276 The Creeper.

Creepers have distinctive legs. Made of four squares they articulate and walk in a distinctive fashion within the game that can only be described as 'creeping' – hence the name. Recreating these legs with the right look is essential to this build. The legs are fashioned using pneumatic T-bars and different tiles. The head can swivel and bob in the same way as its in-game counterpart as it is joined to the body via mini-ball joints.

Minecraft is a fantastic source of inspiration for LEGO builds. Thanks to the blocky aesthetic, almost everything in the game translates easily and naturally into LEGO form. With its almost limitless number of characters, animals and other creatures, the sources of inspiration for cool builds are extensive. This is a fantastic scale to render Minecraft builds in and this Creeper is ready to be joined by both friends and foes.

WILL TACHICK



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/creeper

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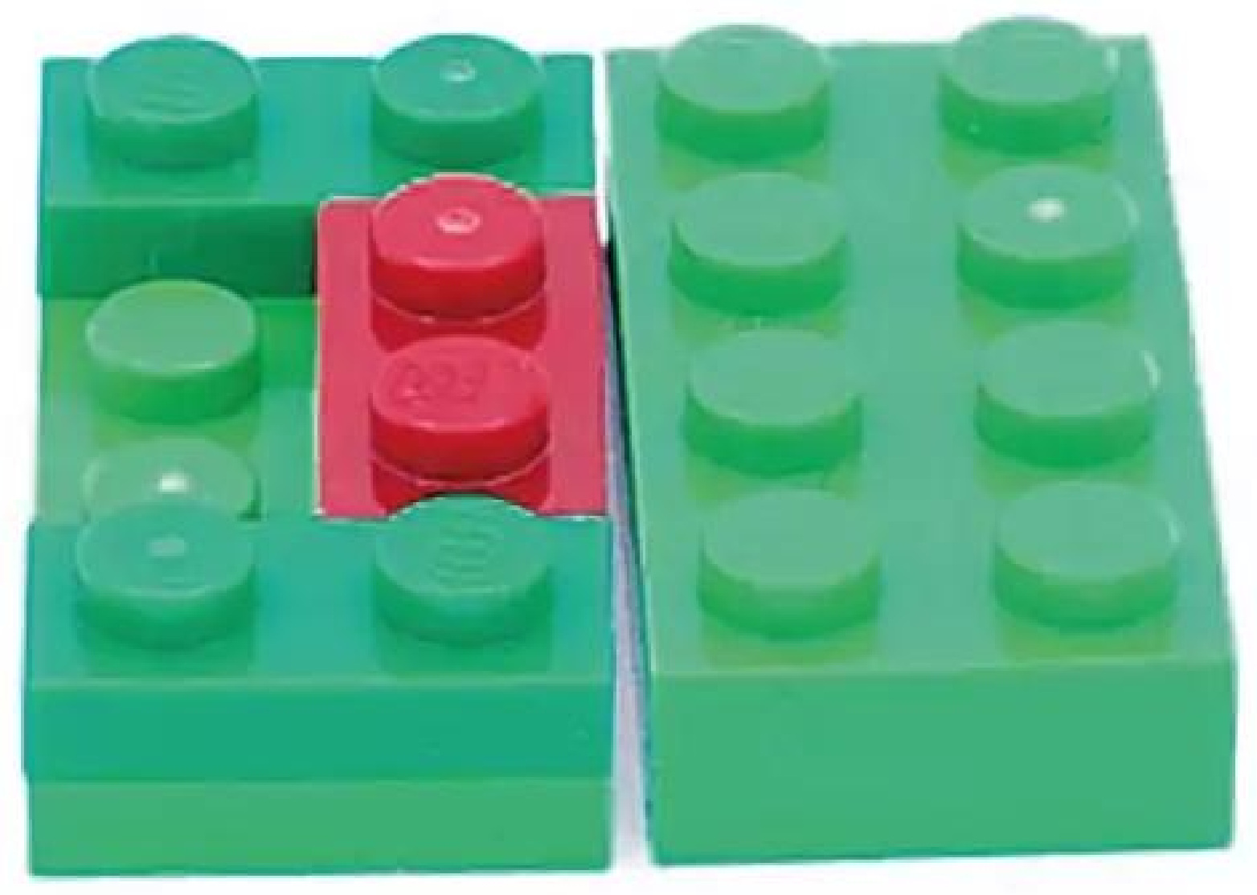

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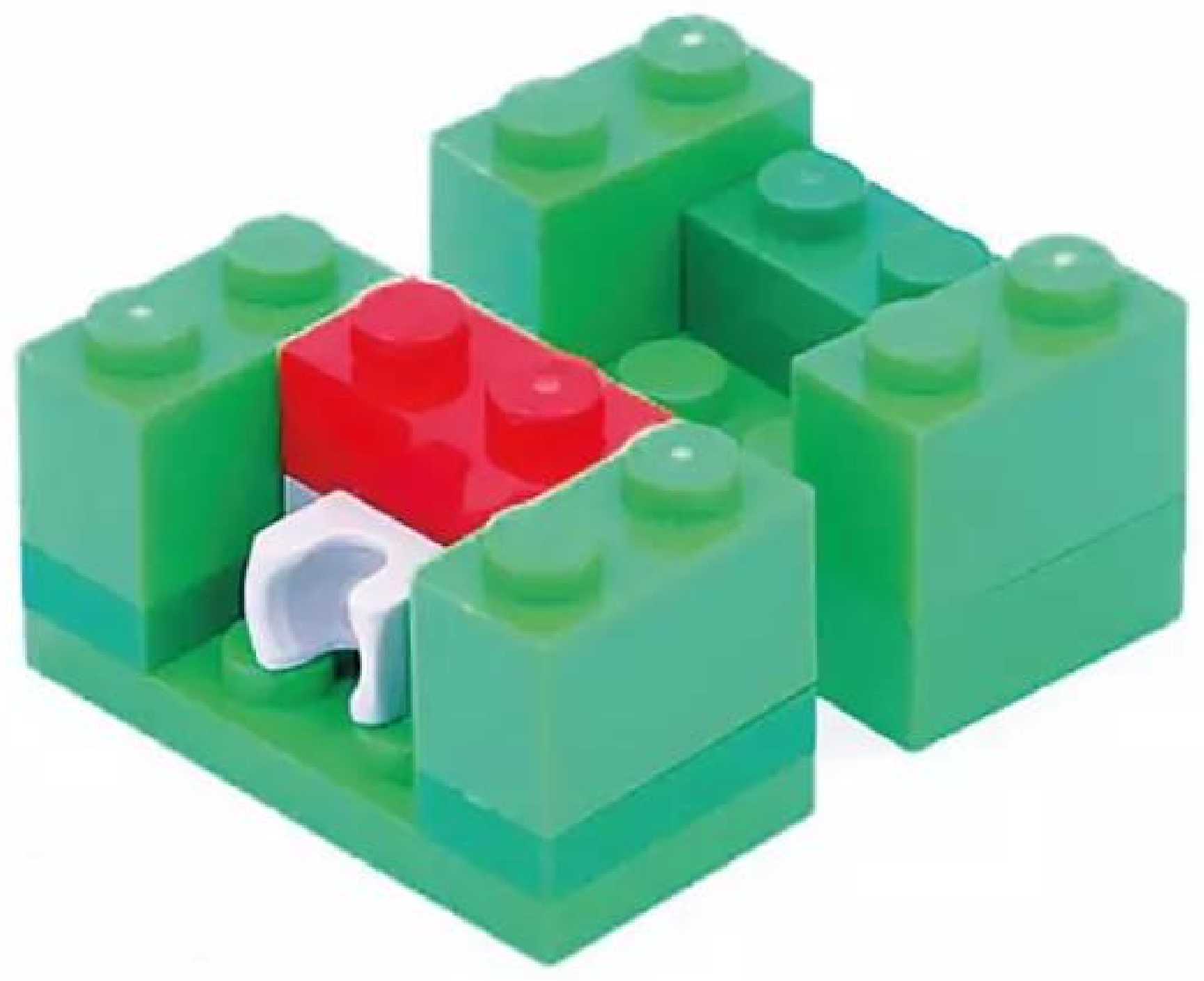

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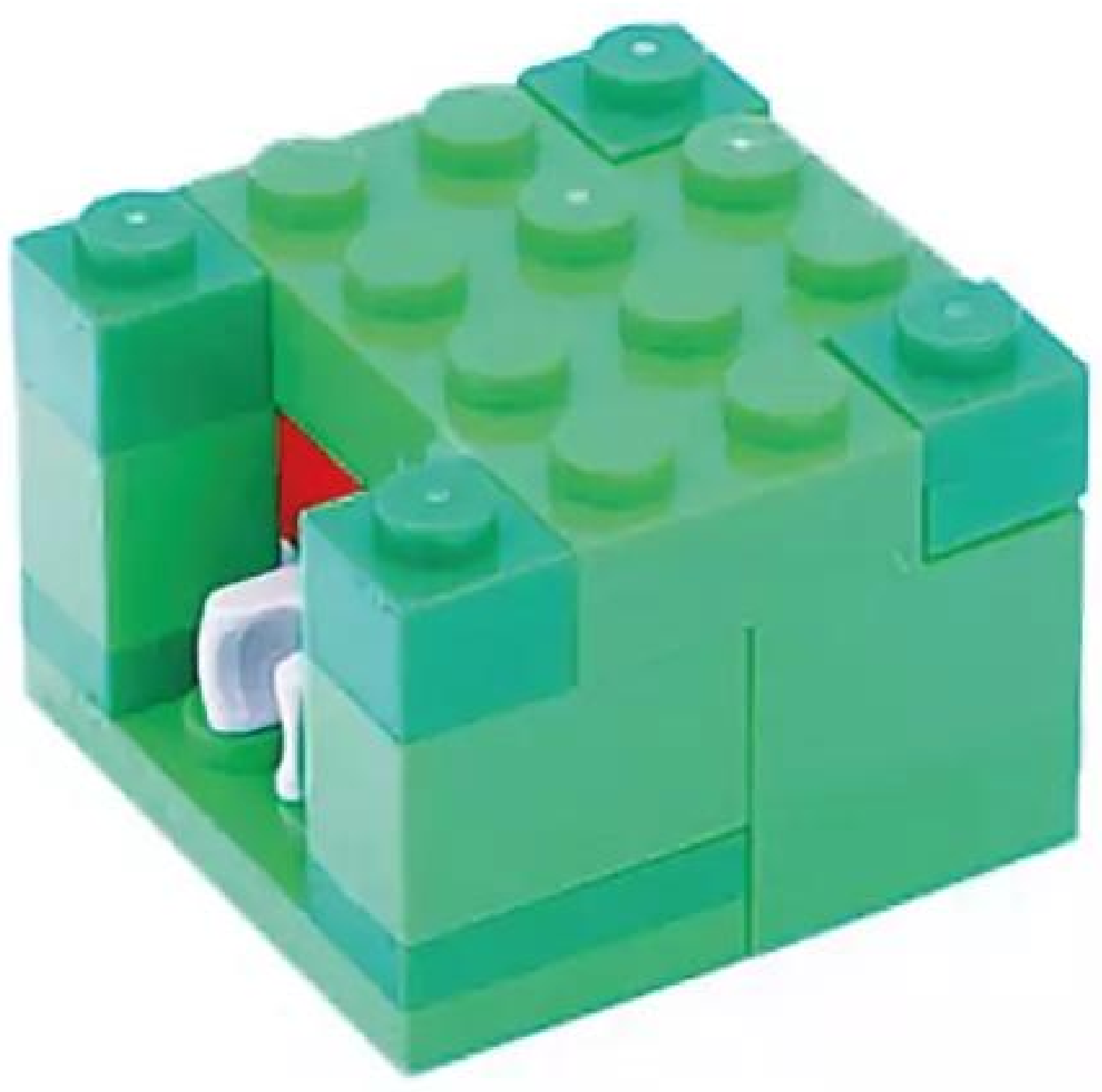

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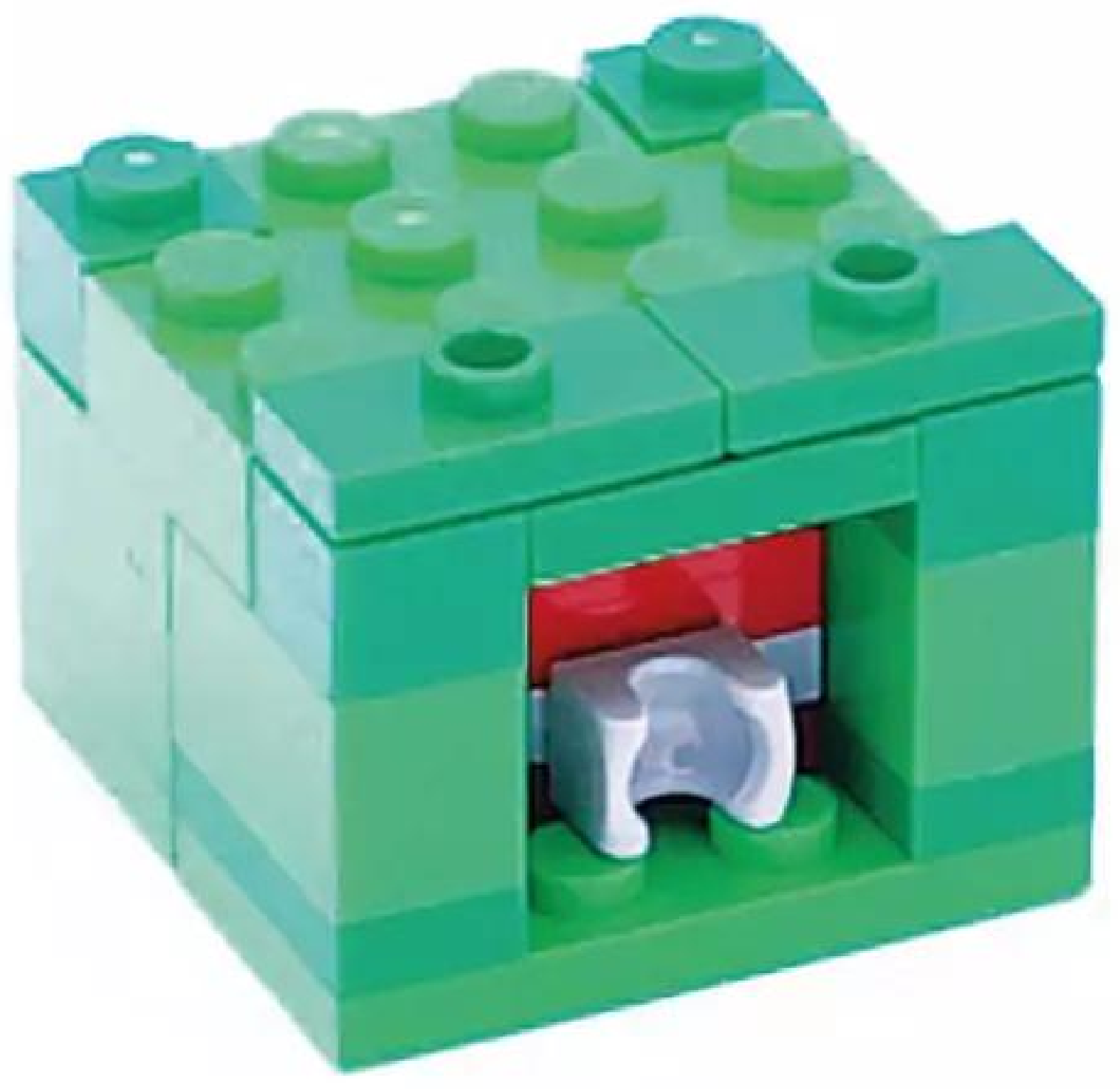

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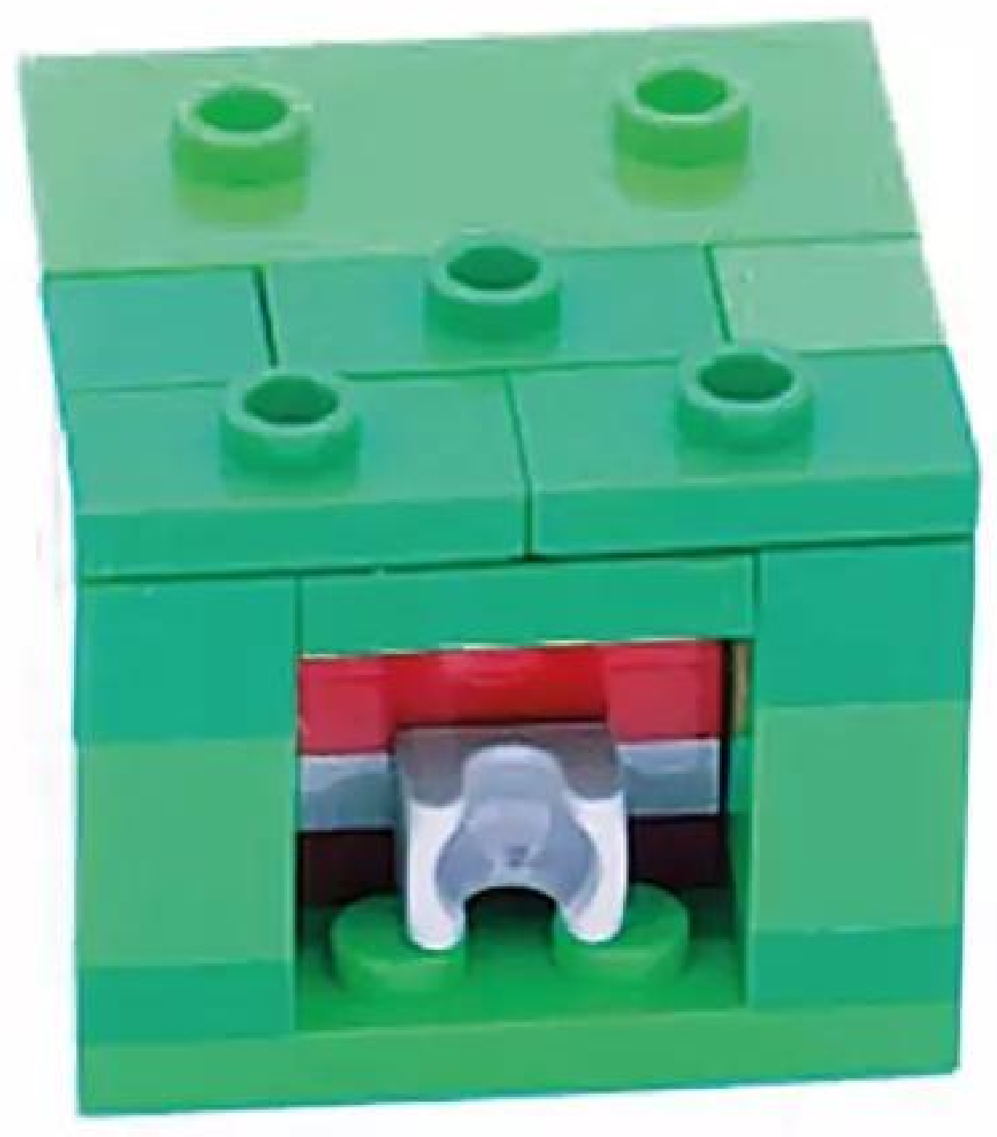

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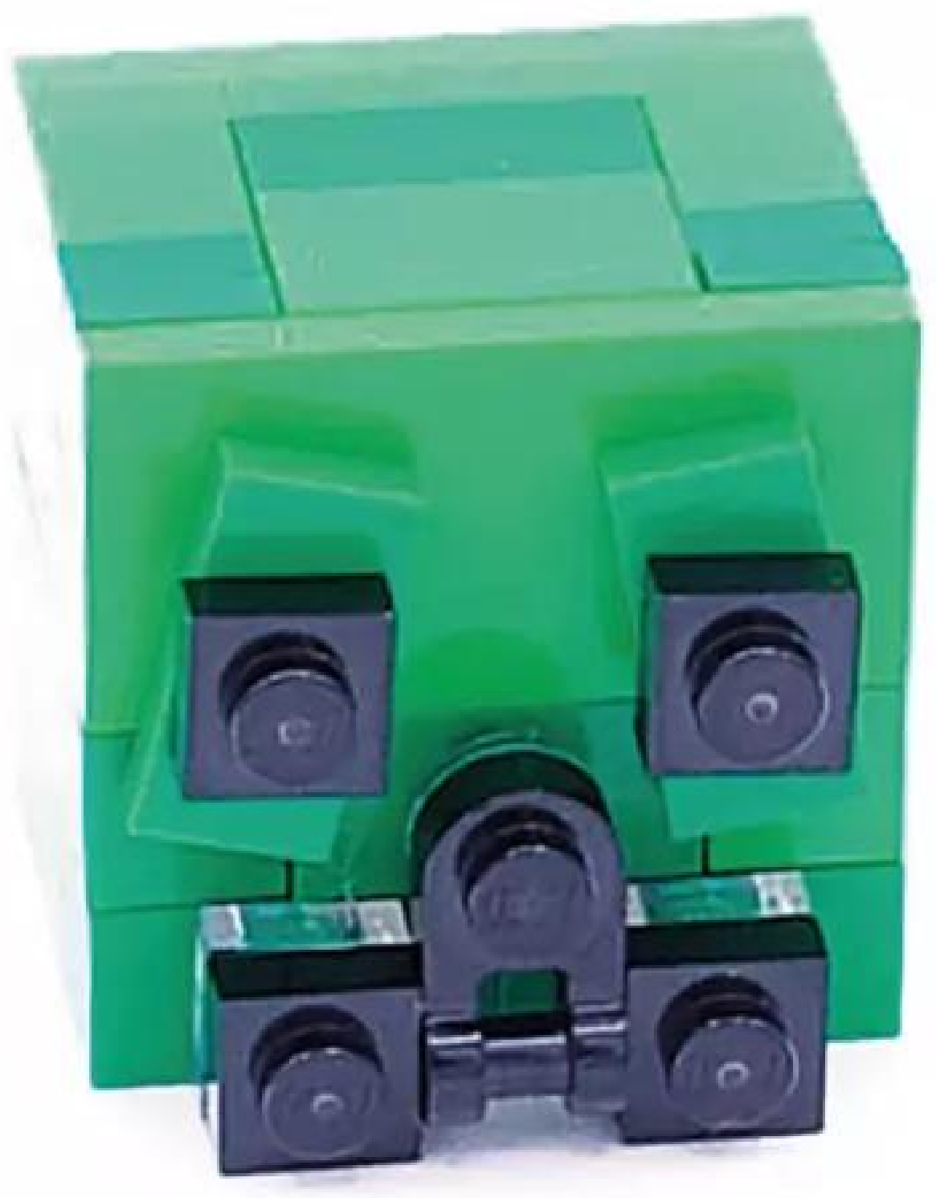

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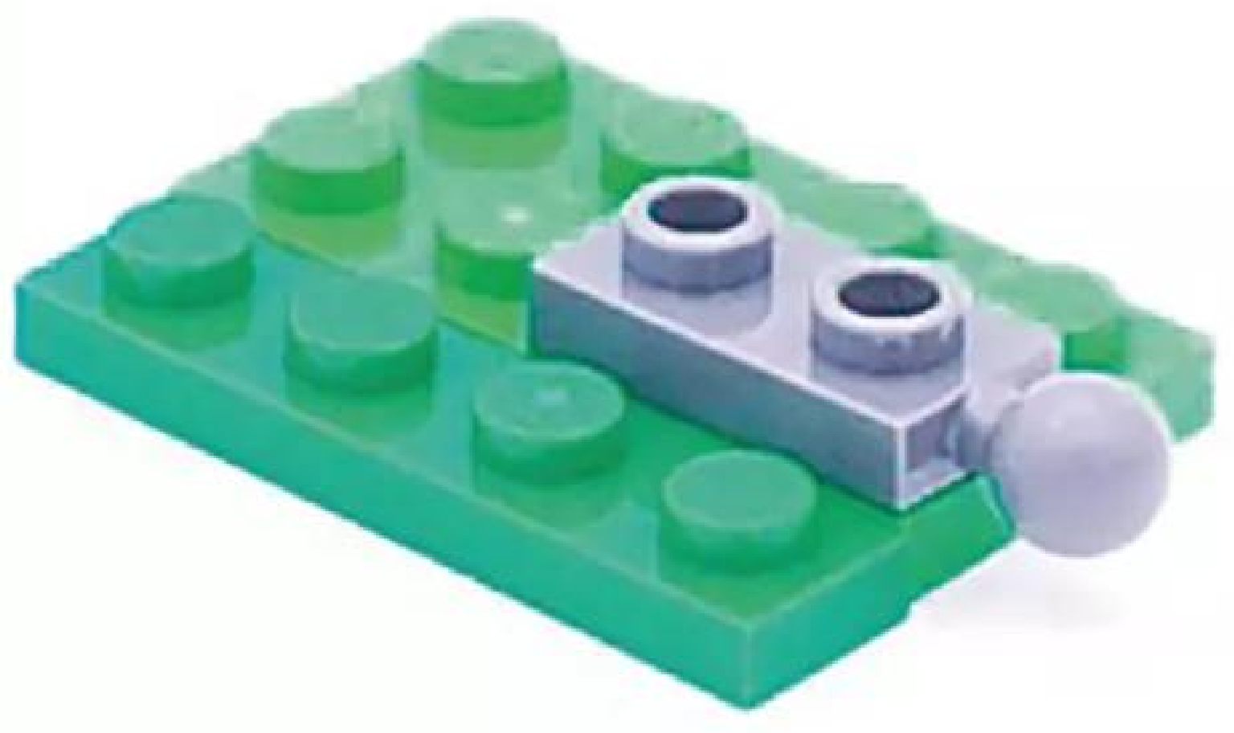

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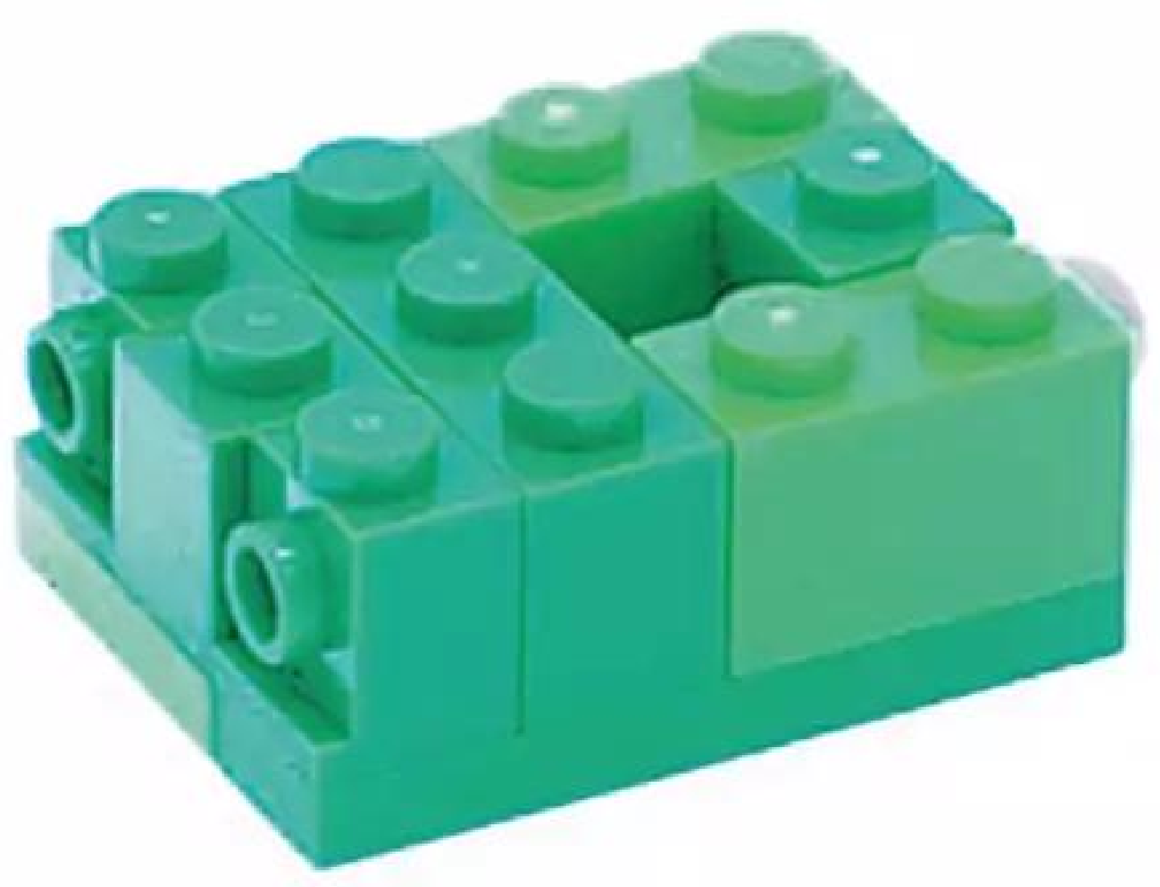

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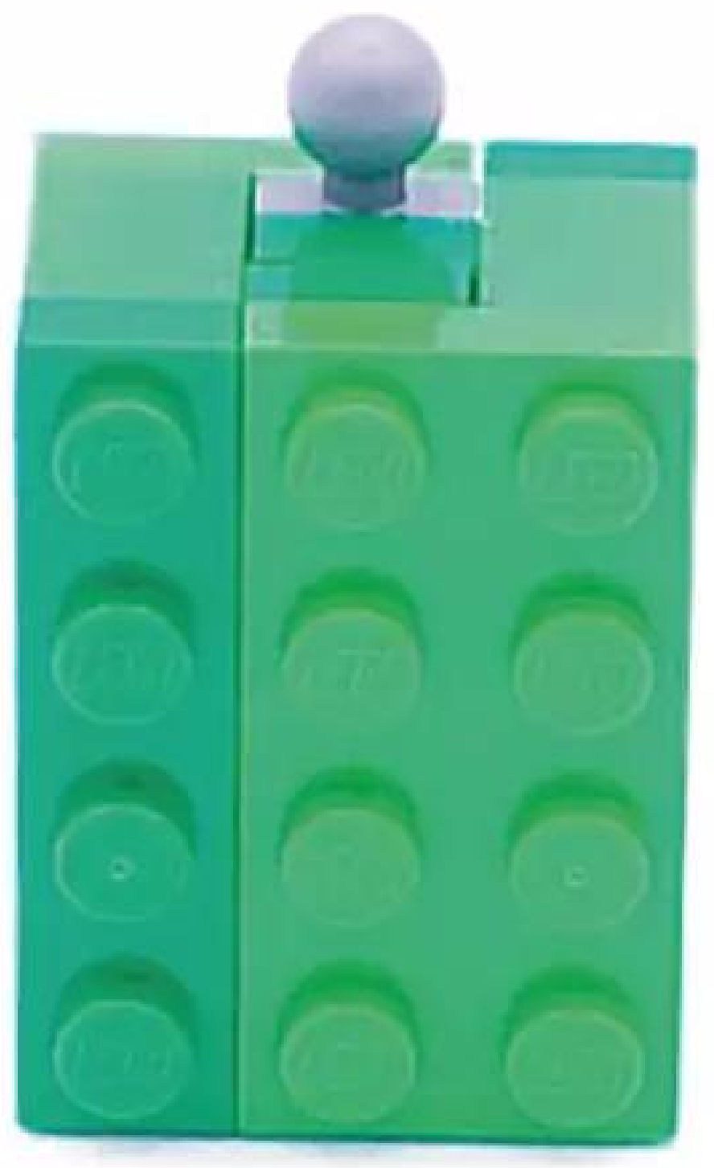

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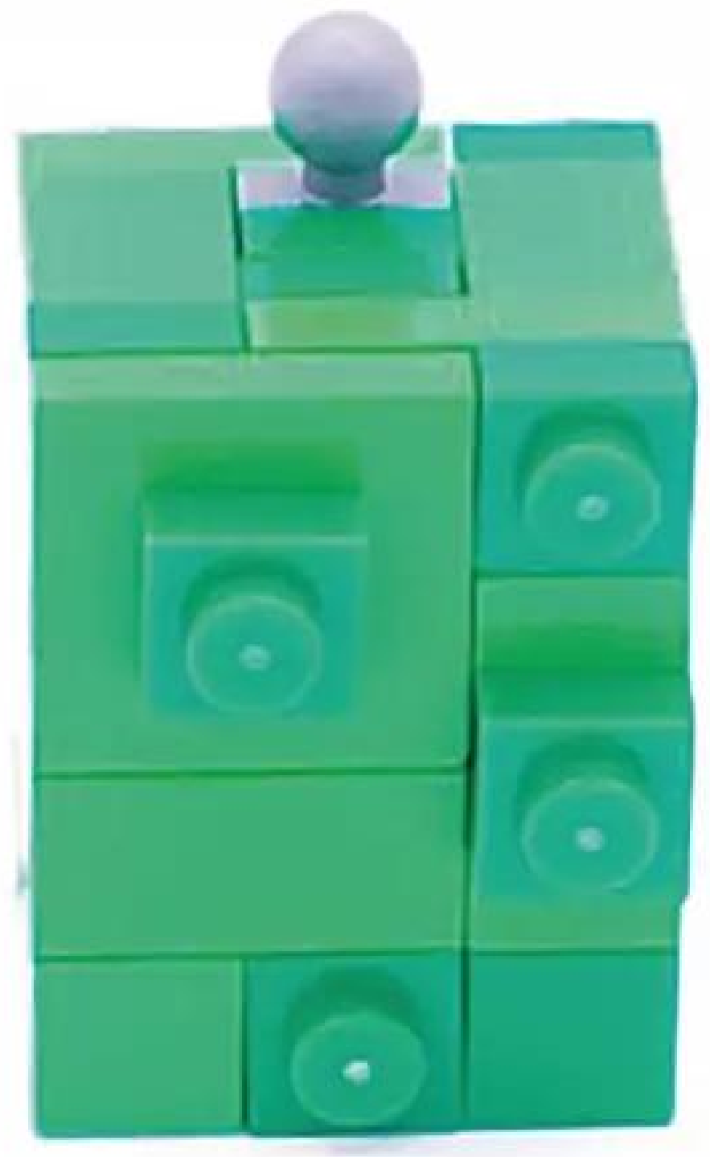

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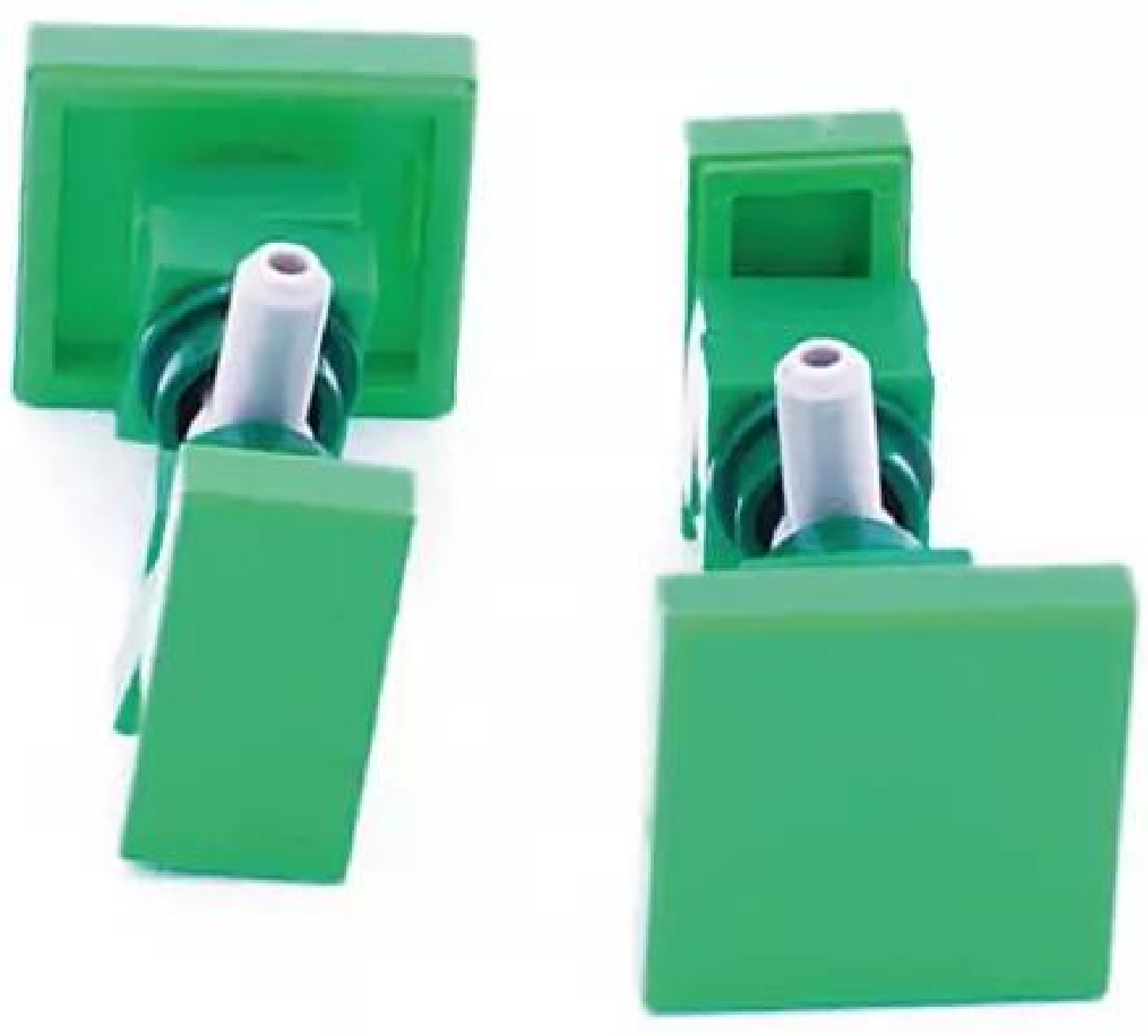

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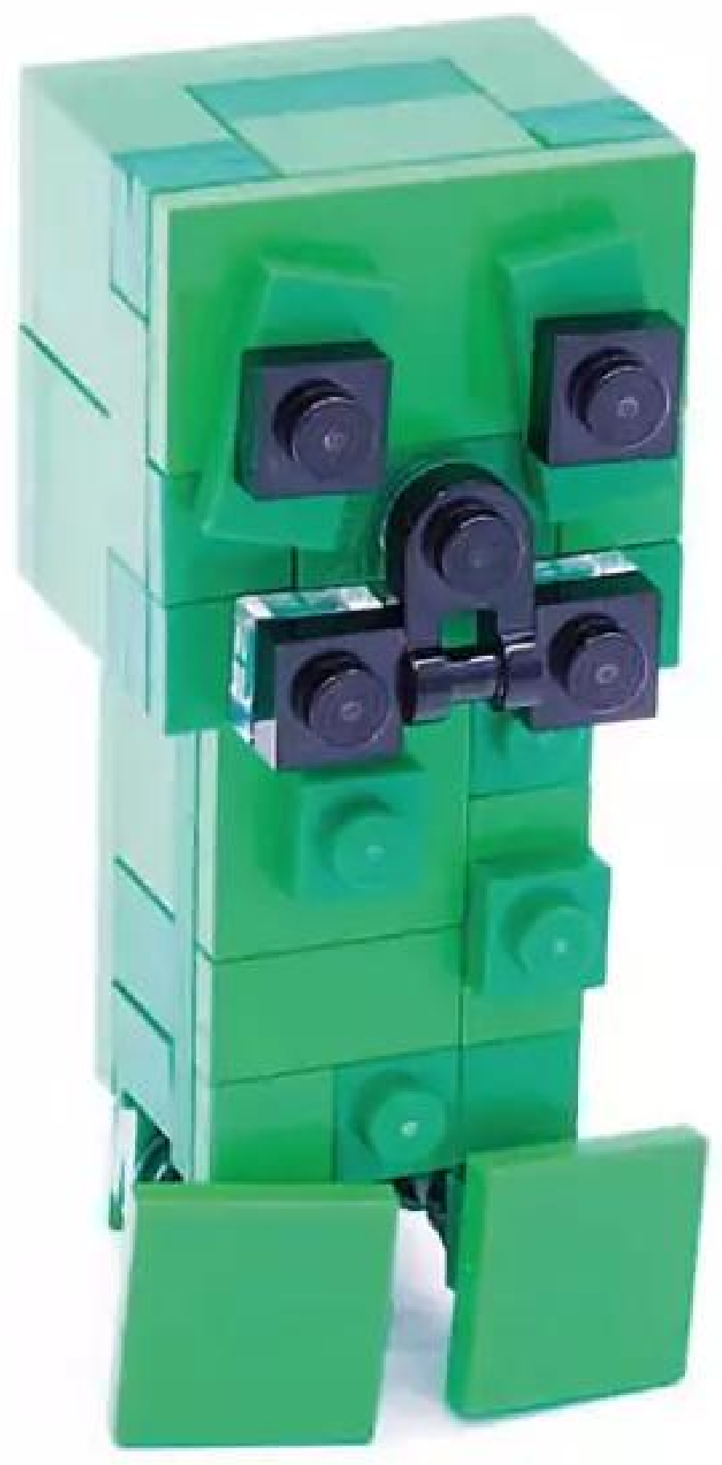
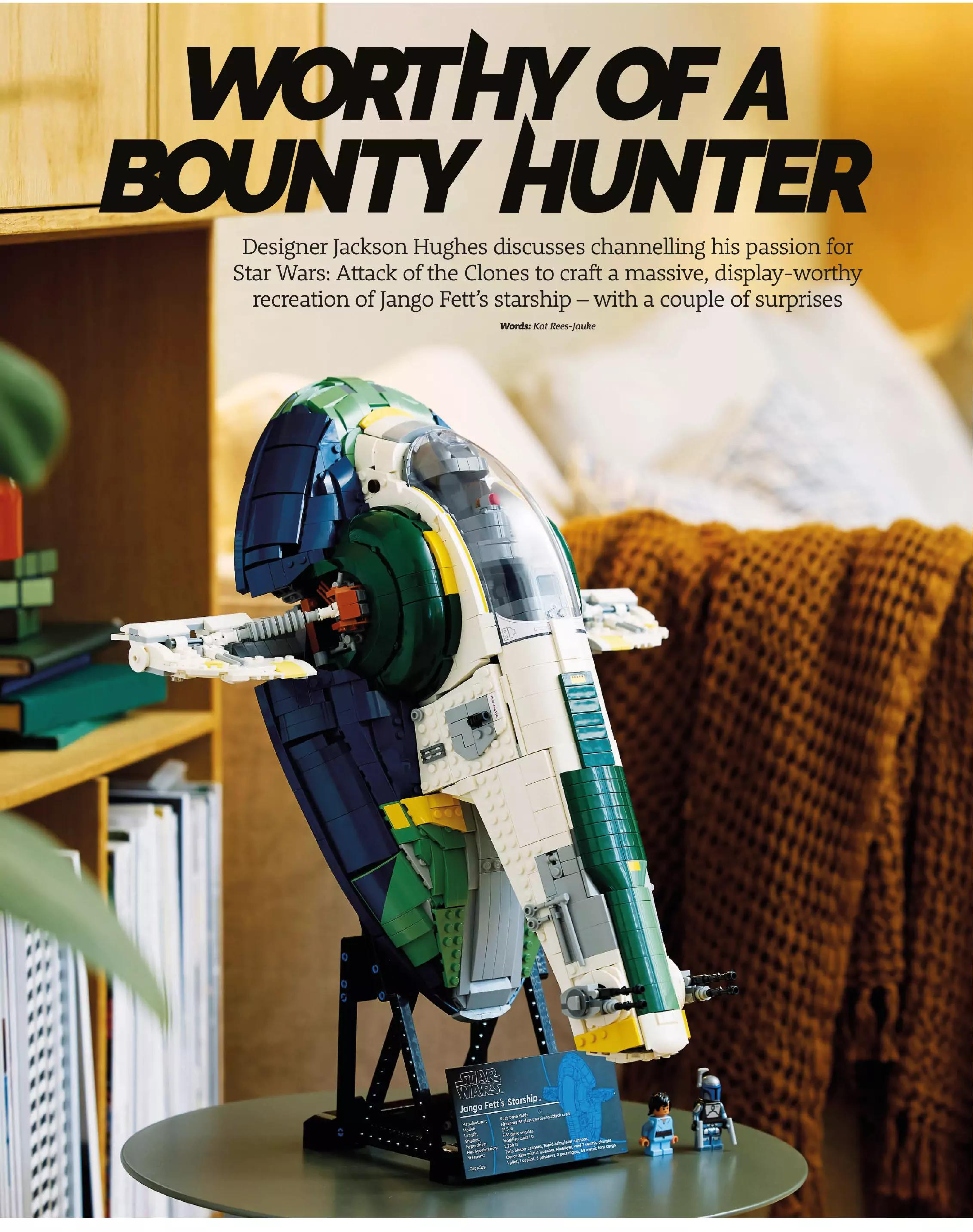


WORTHY OF A BOUNTY HUNTER

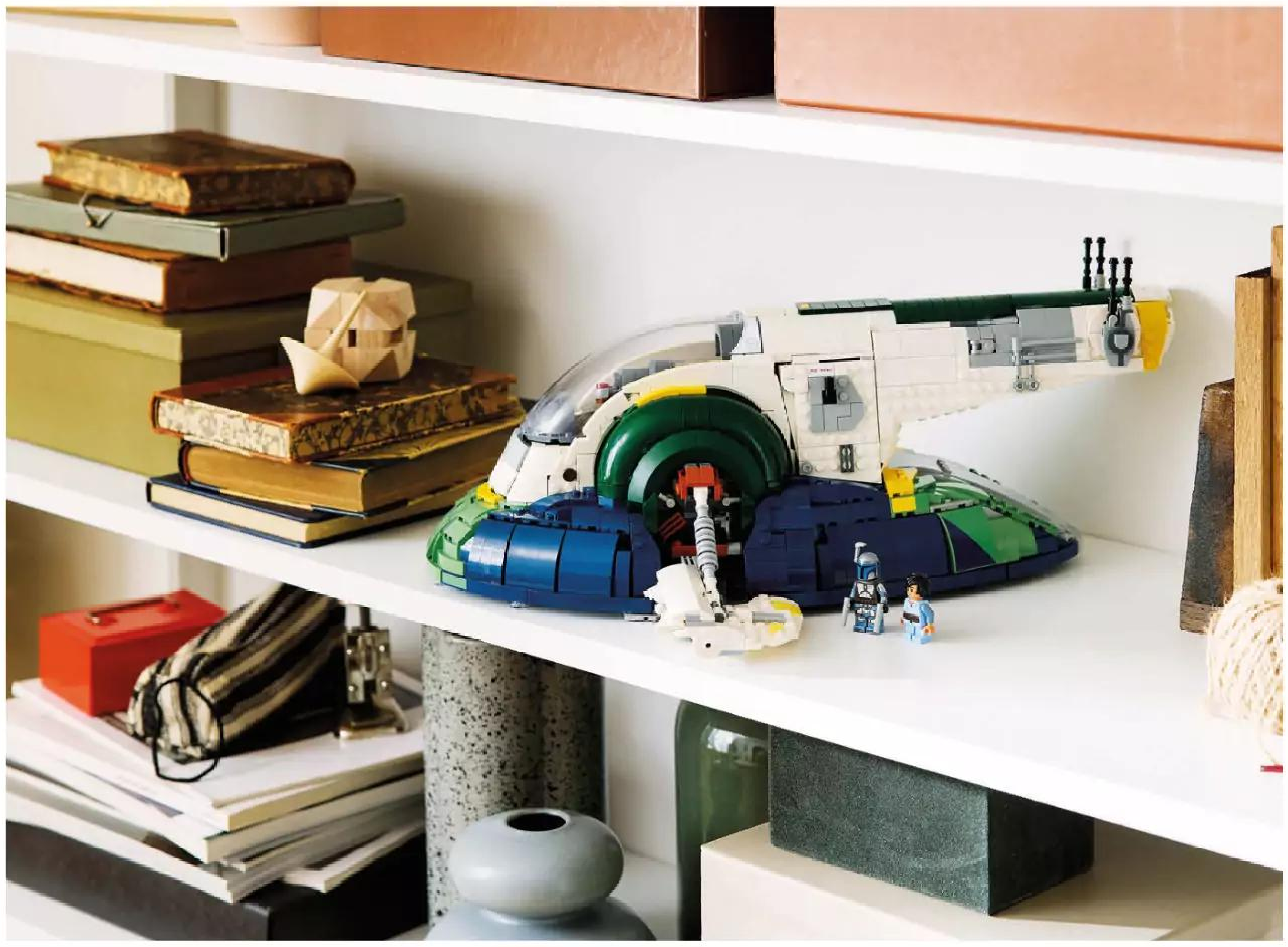
Designer Jackson Hughes discusses channelling his passion for Star Wars: Attack of the Clones to craft a massive, display-worthy recreation of Jango Fett's starship – with a couple of surprises

Words: *Kat Rees-Jauke*


STAR WARS
Jango Fett's Starship
Manufacturer: Kuat Drive Yards
Model: Firespray-31-class patrol and attack craft
Length: 21.5 m
Engines: F-31 drive engines
Hyperdrive: Modified class 1.0
Max Acceleration: 2,700 G
Weapons: Twin blaster cannons, Rapid-firing laser cannons, Concussion missile launcher, Minelayer, Void-7 seismic charges
Capacity: 1 pilot, 1 copilot, 6 prisoners, 3 passengers, 40 metric tons cargo

75409 Jango Fett's Starship is a UCS set that is also minifigure compatible

Right: *Jango's ship in landing mode.*



Infamous across the galaxy for being a ruthless bounty hunter and fighter, Jango Fett was notorious in the criminal underworld. There was no job or bounty that he couldn't complete. It was his proficiency that led to Jango catching the attention of the Sith, with Darth Tyranus hiring the bounty hunter to become the genetic template for a secret army being created on the planet Kamino. When Jango Fett came to the attention of the Jedi, he had to outrun Obi Wan Kenobi through an asteroid field in one of the most memorable action sequences from Star Wars: Attack of the Clones.

Swiftly darting around asteroids surrounding the planet Geonosis, Jango Fett's starship could outmanoeuvre Obi Wan Kenobi's agile Jedi Starfighter. Modified with weaponry and explosive seismic charges, the bounty hunter's vessel was designed to be practical for shady business and outrunning law enforcement. Despite Jango Fett's memorable role in the movie and the iconic vibrating sound of his seismic charges, this is the first time his customised Firespray-class vessel has been available as a model since 2002.

It was LEGO Model Designer Jackson Hughes's love of the Star Wars prequels that gave him more than sufficient motivation to make Jango Fett's starship as accurate as possible. "I remember going to see Attack of the Clones when I was nine years old and the seismic charge moment blew me away. I thought Jango Fett was the coolest thing since Boba Fett. I drew pencil sketches of him when I was a kid because I was such a big fan.

"When I heard we might make an Ultimate Collector Series version of this ship, I cornered [Design Director] Jens [Kronvold Frederiksen] to ask if I could do it. That passion drove me to make this model the best it could be."

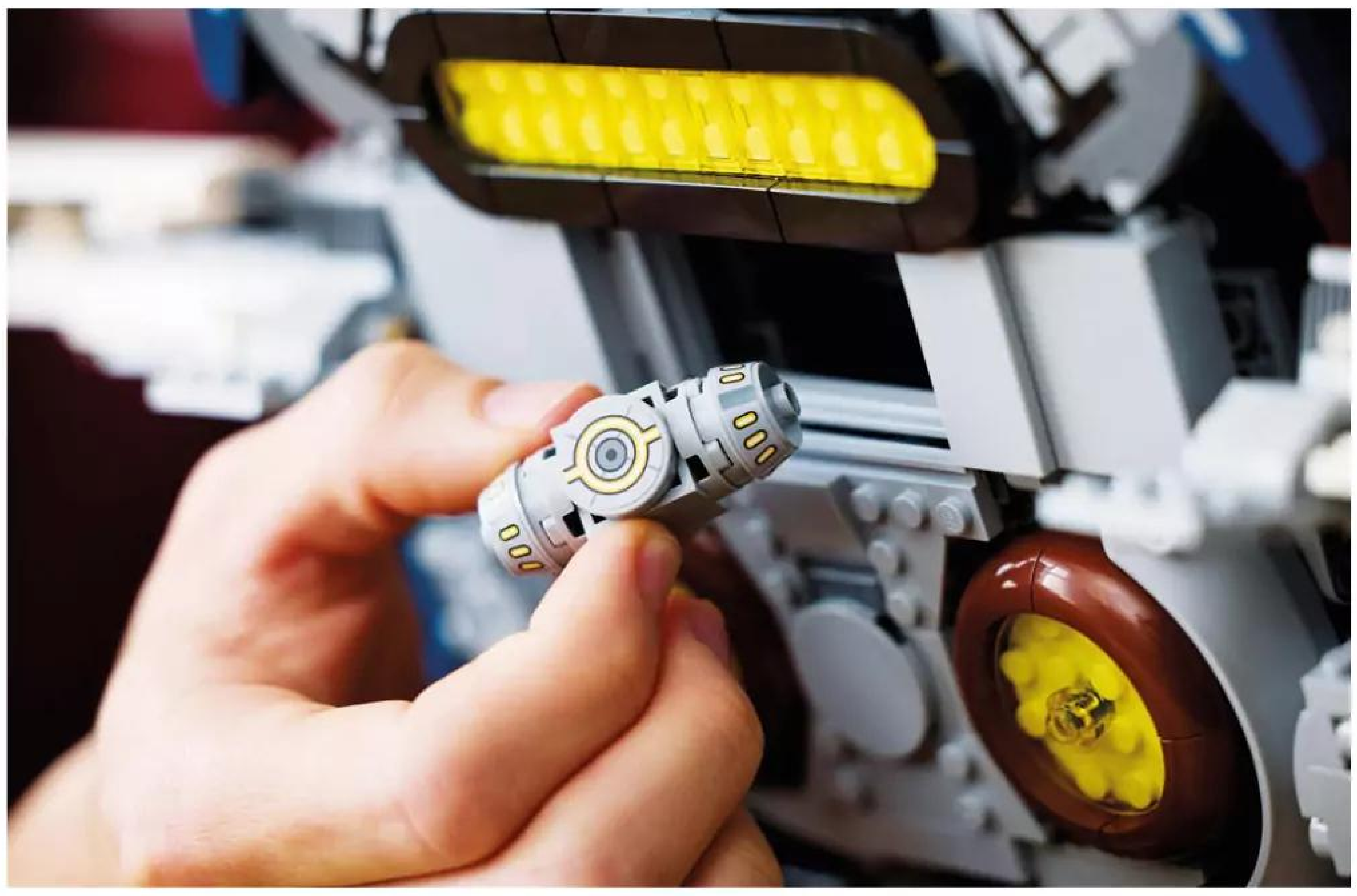
Jackson's main goal was to improve upon the design of 75060 Slave I from 2015. That Ultimate Collector Series (UCS) set was based on Boba Fett's version of the ship from The Empire Strikes Back. A lot of new curved elements have been added to the LEGO parts catalogue since its release.

"I spent a lot of time admiring the 2015 version but I wanted a blank slate. I don't own it and have never built it," explains Jackson. He decided to start from the ground up. "I wanted to provide a new building experience with a completely new design, so when I approached making the shapes I chose not to look at the 2015 version."

SHAPING THE SHIP

Trying to create more organic contouring proved challenging though as Jango Fett's ship is a mix of round and very angular shapes. "It was the upper part of the curvature that connects to the nose that was the most challenging," says Jackson, pointing out the joint where the two meet. "The curve is not regular at all, compounding and changing as it contours. So that was really difficult to figure out. It took a lot of experimentation to figure out how to connect the curves in a way that looked organic."

With the full range of curved and bowed elements at the design team's disposal, the hull is rounder and more organic in shape than it was in 75060. "I printed out a scale reference and started working on it by laying out bow elements around the perimeter to achieve that oval. I

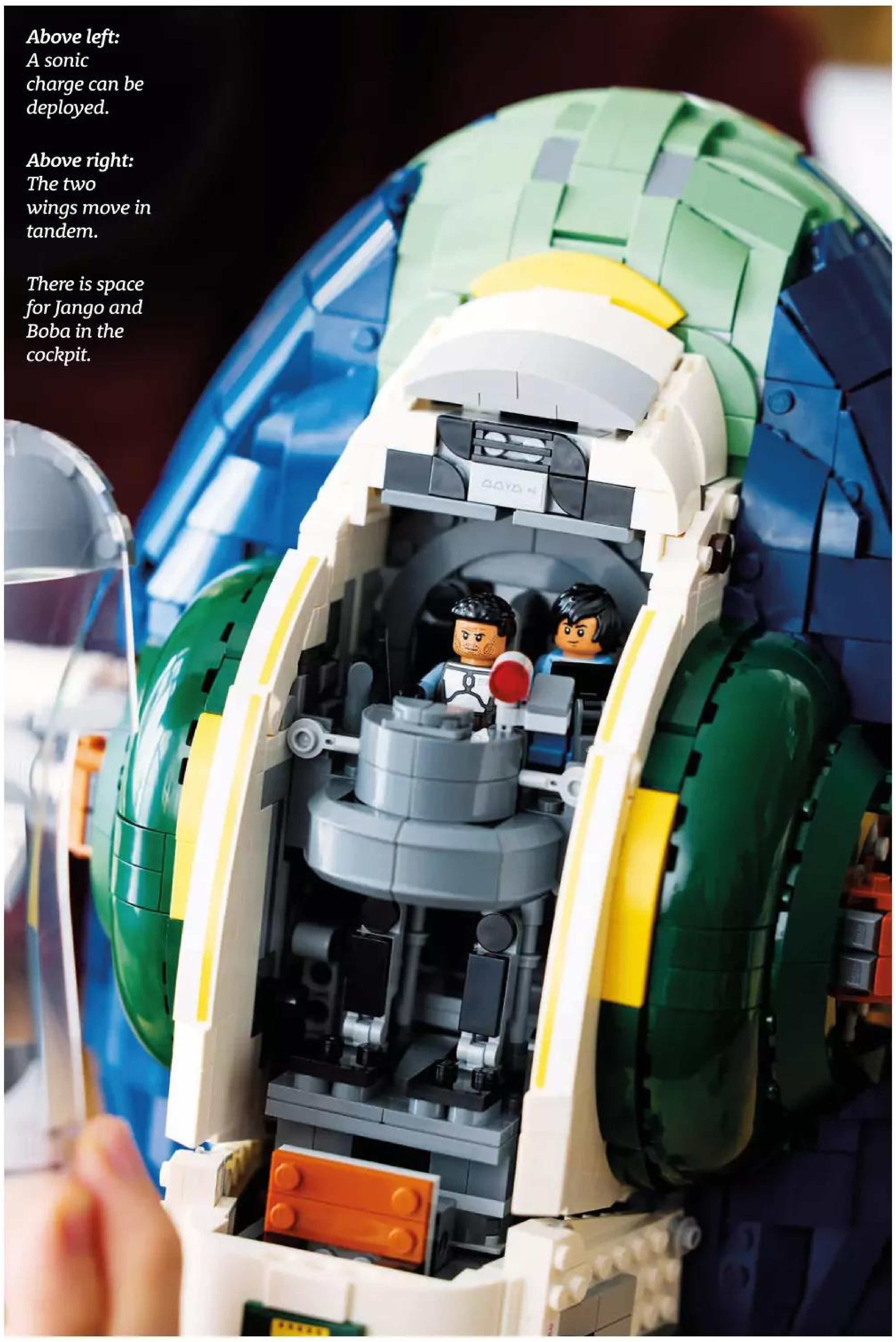


figured out how to connect them later," he says, referring to the new 1x8 bowed tiles that frame the ship. "In this new model the rounded hull, that's almost like an egg shape, is a lot more accurate." Although Jackson started with a different approach to the 2015 version, he soon shifted gears and went back to that model.

While the correct scaling and rounded contours for the hull are new, comparing 75409 and 75060 reveals that the 'nose' of the ship has barely changed. "Once I had gotten far enough into the design, then I went and scoured the building instructions of the previous version just to see if it had done anything better.

"It's almost an entirely new design – except for the nose section. That's very similar as I didn't think it could be improved upon." Having the nose section almost identical makes displaying the two models together satisfying, as Jango Fett's version is still the same scale despite using around 1,000 more pieces.

Most of these extra pieces are hidden within the skeleton of the ship to help stabilise the wings or visible on the exterior where they provide the more detailed curvature. "We developed a lot of new elements to achieve that." In fact this model actually pushed the design team's limits for recolours and new elements.



Above left: *A sonic charge can be deployed.*

Above right: *The two wings move in tandem.*

There is space for Jango and Boba in the cockpit.

Although all Ultimate Collector Series models are permitted a certain number of recolours – and even new elements where absolutely necessary – Jango Fett's Starship had to go slightly overboard with around 20 new pieces and recolours. The list included new 4x4 curved tiles for near where the hull connects to the nose of the ship, as well as a bigger canopy element for the cockpit.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

When Jango owned the ship in Attack of the Clones it didn't feature the gyroscopic cockpit that Boba Fett's version has – instead it's fixed in place. This is why during Jango Fett's duel with Obi Wan Kenobi on one of the Kamino cloning facility docking bays, a young Boba Fett has to be almost upside down in order to operate the blaster cannons to try and help his father. "Without needing to have it rotate we could focus on having a larger, more detailed interior," says Jackson, who designed the cockpit to be removable so that fans can appreciate the details.

"There are two decks, just as in the movie, with the upper deck being the cockpit. It's actually removable via a sliding rail mechanism and it has room for both the pilot and co-pilot seats." While Jackson tried to get this space as accurate as possible, with the intricate trio of control screens for the ship, he also wanted to include a hidden reference. "Behind the cockpit there is a little storage area for Jango's blasters and jetpack – but there's also a bacta tank." It is inspired by Star Wars: Bounty Hunter.

Released in 2002 for PlayStation, Star Wars: Bounty Hunter acted as an origin story for how Jango Fett became the clone template for the Grand Army of the Republic. During one of the missions in the game, Jango has to locate a bounty on the moon Oovo IV and during a tense jailbreak he steals a Firespray 31 class patrol-craft. This will go on to become his infamous bounty hunting vessel that Boba Fett then repaints.

Bacta tanks are one of the game's many collectible items and players can use them to restore health on missions. There is one other reference to the classic game. "There's a sticker just above the pilot's seat that says 'Oovo IV' in Aurebesh," says Jackson. "It's like a fun manufacturer's label."

A function allows builders to open the boarding ramp and simulate the minifigures entering the ship. A lever mechanism is incorporated into this one so it can open. "In the movie you'll remember there's a boarding ramp that recedes into the ship. When you press on the ramp it raises the entrance hatch which adds some accurate functionality." It allows fans to recreate the scene in which Jango Fett hits his helmet while boarding, a callback to the clumsy stormtrooper who collides with a Death Star doorway in A New Hope.

Whether fans decide to display Jango Fett nearly denting his helmet or in the pilot's seat, his minifigure has had a massive upgrade since his last appearance in 2017. "Jango has arm printing this time around, which is a first for his minifigure," says Senior Graphic Designer Madison O'Neil. "Jango's rangefinder is also updated. It's much more accurate to the one that Jango Fett and the Clone Troopers use. Up until now the rangefinder element came in a bag with three others and some visors, so to cut down on plastic waste we decided to create this unique one.

"A young Boba Fett also has redesigned printing and a new wig." Boba Fett's updated hair element is the same as the one Darth Dev uses in 75389 The Dark Falcon, which is more accurate to his messy short hair than his previous iteration from 75191 Jedi Starfighter with Hyperdrive. As the team focused on the scenes where Jango Fett is either escaping

Right: The ramp allows the characters to enter the ship.

Bottom right: The graphic designers updated Jango Fett and Boba Fett for the set.

Obi Wan's pursuit or visiting the Kaminoans, no other minifigures were considered except his son. "Ultimately we chose the characters who are most associated with the scenes," says Madison, who also wanted the minifigures to make sense on display within the ship as there is no extra display stand for the characters.

When they are placed in the cockpit, the ship's wings frame them. As in the movie, the wings rotate when the model is moved from flight position to landing position.

"It's pretty similar to the mechanism in the 2015 version, with the wings below the axis of the ship so that gravity pulls them when you take it off its stand," explains Jackson. "However, the main challenge was that the 2015 model had a stabilising cross-axle that ran all the way through each wing. But on this ship, the seismic charge is in the way, so I had to work around that and place the mechanism around it when designing the skeleton of the ship." This also meant that he would need to design a new stand.

> "It took a lot of experimentation to figure out how to connect the curves in a way that looked organic."

"I started with the old stand but it inserted into the model differently," continues Jackson. "As the rear of this ship is different, we found that it worked better if the new stand simply had hooks that slide up and into the model. It can't move forward once it's on the stand and is held there by gravity." This allows you to display Jango Fett's starship as if it is flying through space, while a few transparent 1x1 tiles hidden around the engines allow it to be stable if it is displayed flat in landing mode.

STAR WARS NOSTALGIA

"I did look back at the 2002 version [7153]," says Jackson. "It's a set I loved as a kid." However, that model sparked some debate within the team about the colour scheme and which LEGO colours are best for certain parts of the ship. Even other collectibles, such as the Hasbro toys, haven't maintained a consistent use of colour.

"One of the things that helped guide us was that the 2002 model looked perfect with its colours, so we used the same ones," adds Jackson. "Specifically, we were wondering whether the green parts of the ship should be sand green, light grey, dappled grey – or if it was even green at all. It's very ambiguous in the reference photos, but we stuck with that original sand green."

As Jackson was designing this model he regularly had Attack of the Clones and footage from Bounty Hunter playing on his computer to add to the nostalgic atmosphere. It's something he hopes that fans will also feel when looking at the new set. With the success of 75309 Republic Gunship and 75367 Venator-class Republic Attack Cruiser, the team is thrilled that fans are excited for more Ultimate Collector Series sets based around the prequels.

"We knew that there was high demand from fans for Jango Fett's version," explains Creative Lead Jens Kronvold Frederiksen. "There is no set rule as to how long there needs to be between the same model – it just depends on the context. We knew we could create an improved version, so we decided now was the perfect opportunity."

75409 Jango Fett's Starship is the culmination of design passion and ten years of brick evolution, taking some inspiration from its predecessor while making improvements to hone the form. It makes 75409 a unique model, just as the ship is in Star Wars: Bounty Hunter. As Jango states: "She's a Firespray Pursuit Special. One of six prototypes manufactured for the prison. She's the last of her kind now." And while this version probably won't be the last of its kind for the LEGO Star Wars team, it will certainly be a highlight for bounty hunting fans of the theme.

REFLECTIONS ON STAR WARS

LEGO designers discuss what they love most about the epic saga in the midst of the intoxicating atmosphere at Star Wars Celebration Japan

Words: *Graham E. Hancock*

There's nowhere better to talk to the LEGO Star Wars design team about their passion for the saga than at Star Wars Celebration Japan, the biggest event in the galaxy. Senior Model Designer César Soares, Model Designer Jackson Hughes and Senior Model Designer Peter Carmichael took a break from signing autographs and taking selfies to share their personal takes on Star Wars fandom and LEGO design.

Blocks: What is your favourite Star Wars film?

Jackson: I'm going to choose Rogue One from the modern films, but Revenge of the Sith from the original six. It's just such an amazing payoff to the saga. It's funny that you get it out of order, because it's the end of the prequels, but the way that it connects to the original trilogy and the emotional moments are amazing. The highs are so high.

César: I'm a little bit older than Jackson, so I grew up with the original

LEGO
STAR WARS
DESIGN TEAM

Senior Model Designer César Soares

LEGO
STAR WARS

Model Designer Jackson Hughes

STAR WARS
DESIGN TEAM

Senior Model Designer Peter Carmichael

trilogy. My all-time favourite, I would say, is The Empire Strikes Back, although I have a hard time choosing between the three. Regarding modern movies, I would also go with Rogue One, it is fantastic.

Peter: I would say Episode II. That was the first one I remember seeing in theatres. When I saw the Republic Gunships on screen, I was sold. That has been seared into my memory.

The pacing is incredible. I'm a huge fan of the Geonosis arena and that whole scene around that and then getting introduced to the Clones, it was just perfect. Of course, there are so many things in all the other prequels I love, then I love the original trilogy and the sequels… I'm just overall a huge fan.

> "It is very playful, very swooshable. It was really fun to work on."

Blocks: Who is your favourite character?

Jackson: I've been saying Kanan Jarrus. It's always hard to choose, but I love Star Wars Rebels and Kanan Jarrus is like the big brother I always wanted to have.

Peter: My favourite character is also from Episode II. I really love Obi-Wan Kenobi, specifically in Episode II. That's my favourite version of Obi-Wan. I think the dynamism between him and Anakin, like butting heads, you start to see Anakin fall off the edge and Obi-Wan is sensing that. Ewan McGregor just knocks it out of the park.

César: For me it's Han Solo. I absolutely love his personality and dry sense of humour and all the little adventures that he puts himself into. If you ask for my favourite villain, most people would probably answer Darth Vader. But I love Darth Maul, and I remember the first time I saw him in the theatre and I was like, 'wow, this character is so cool!'

The first Star Wars movie that I watched in the theatre was The Phantom Menace. I remember going with my friends, we were maybe 20 years old, and we were not disappointed.

Blocks: What is your favourite Star Wars vehicle?

César: I would have to say the Millennium Falcon today. If you think about it, it's not a symmetrical ship. It's all rusty and old, but there's some something to it. A lot of adventures in the movies are directly related to that ship.

Jackson: It's a home.

César: Yeah, it feels like home.

Peter: I really love the Hailfire Droid. I guess that's a droid not a vehicle, but it's kind of like a vehicle. I mean, the Republic Gunship is up there, definitely. I also really love Kylo Ren's TIE Silencer, I think that's one of my favourite TIE variants that we've ever seen.

Jackson: Oh, the Ebon Hawk from Knights of the Old Republic. I played those games for hundreds of hours as a kid. I have such affection for those video games and the characters, also that era of Star Wars – I devoured the Expanded Universe growing up. I love the Old Republic and it's sort of the Millennium Falcon of that era.

Blocks: What's your favourite moment in Star Wars?

Jackson: Maybe Luthen's speech from Andor… actually, no, the Fondor Haulcraft fight in Andor. I have been watching that so many times.

César: I didn't see the original trilogy in theatres, but I was nine years old when I watched A New Hope. I still vividly remember the feeling of watching the cantina scene, like it was yesterday. It definitely made me really fall in love with the Star Wars franchise. I would pick that scene as my favourite one. But there are other moments in the Star Wars movies and shows I think about a lot.

Peter: Hands down, my favourite moment is from Star Wars Rebels, when Darth Maul and Obi Wan have the heart to heart over the campfire, I think that would have been one of the most impactful things we've ever seen if it was done in live action. But anybody who has watched Rebels can really see a different side of the characters that we never get to see in live action.

Blocks: Switching to LEGO design, what is currently your favourite element to use?

Peter: Wow, that's a tough one. I really love using elements that I played with as a child. One thing I personally challenge myself to do is put something from my childhood into every model that I design.

And I just finished designing [75434] K-2SO, it was revealed here at Star Wars Celebration. I really loved the rubber fly wheel [3815] that I used three times in that model. I actually got to colour change it into yellow and that was such an amazing thing. I was a builder before I joined the LEGO Group, displaying at conventions all over the world and I really love seeing unique ways to use classic elements that have been around for decades.

Jackson: There is a 2x4 plate that has a single Technic hole on the end [73045]. What's unique about that is it's one of the very few elements that rotates on the edge of the module on the edge of the brick, instead of in the centre of the brick. It enables you to do some interesting geometrical things.

César: For me, it's the 1x1 by two plates high brick with a stud on the side, with the rounded curve on the back [3386]. It's just a versatile element that we use so much and allows you to make all kinds of different things, especially in smaller parts of a model or in smaller models, so I use it all the time.

Blocks: Jackson, what are you happiest about with the way that 75409 Jango Fett's Starship turned out?

Jackson: It was really satisfying to figure out how to make that ovoid, rounded shape of the hole. I spent maybe 60% of my time just trying to figure that out, so when it came together I was really happy.

Blocks: César, same question about 75399 Rebel U-wing Starfighter?

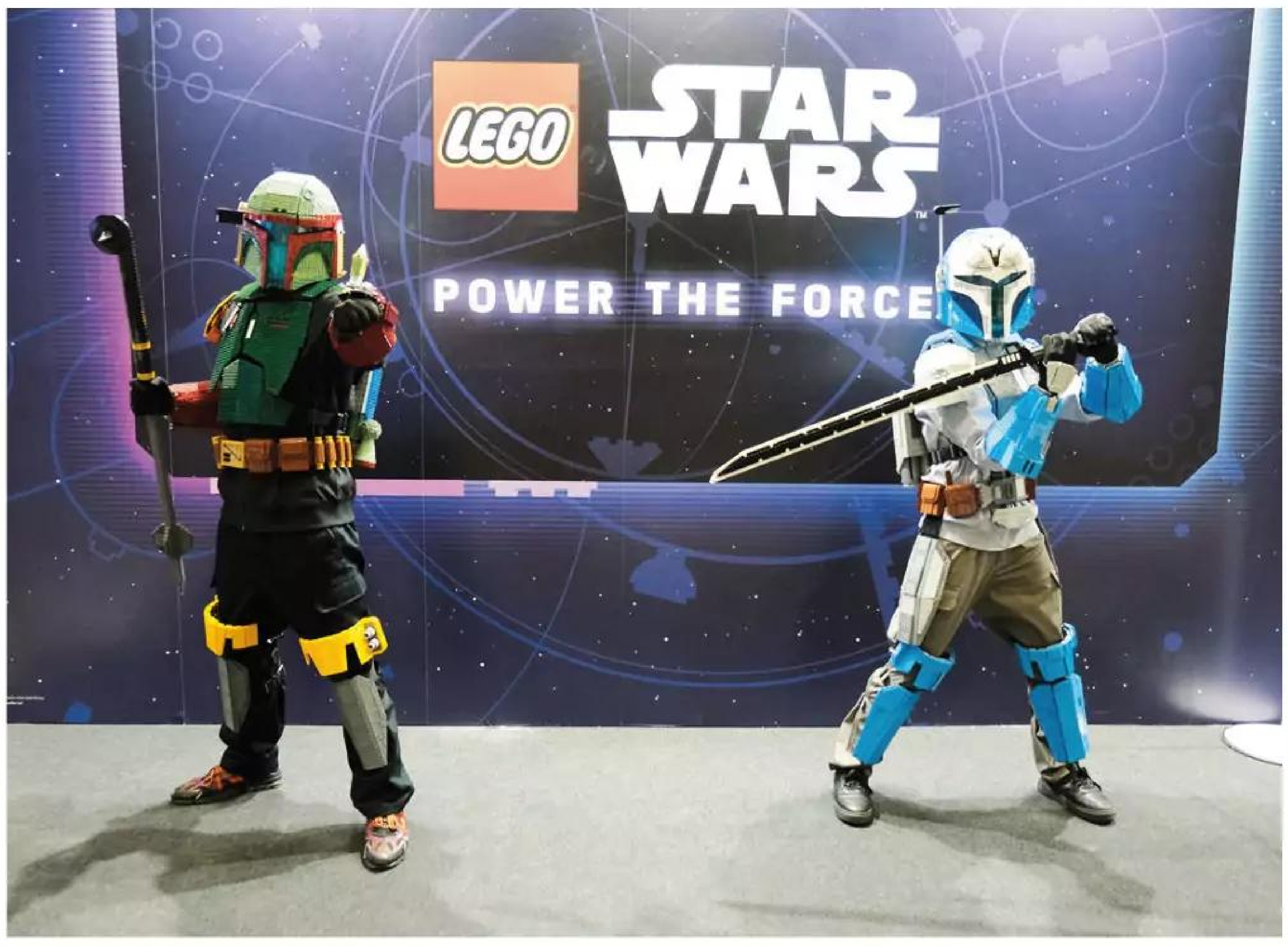
César: It was a pleasure for me to remake the U-wing. I think what I liked the most about designing that particular set was the challenge of building it in a way that is smaller, but still very accurate in the shape and proportions. It is very playful, very swooshable. It was really fun to work on.

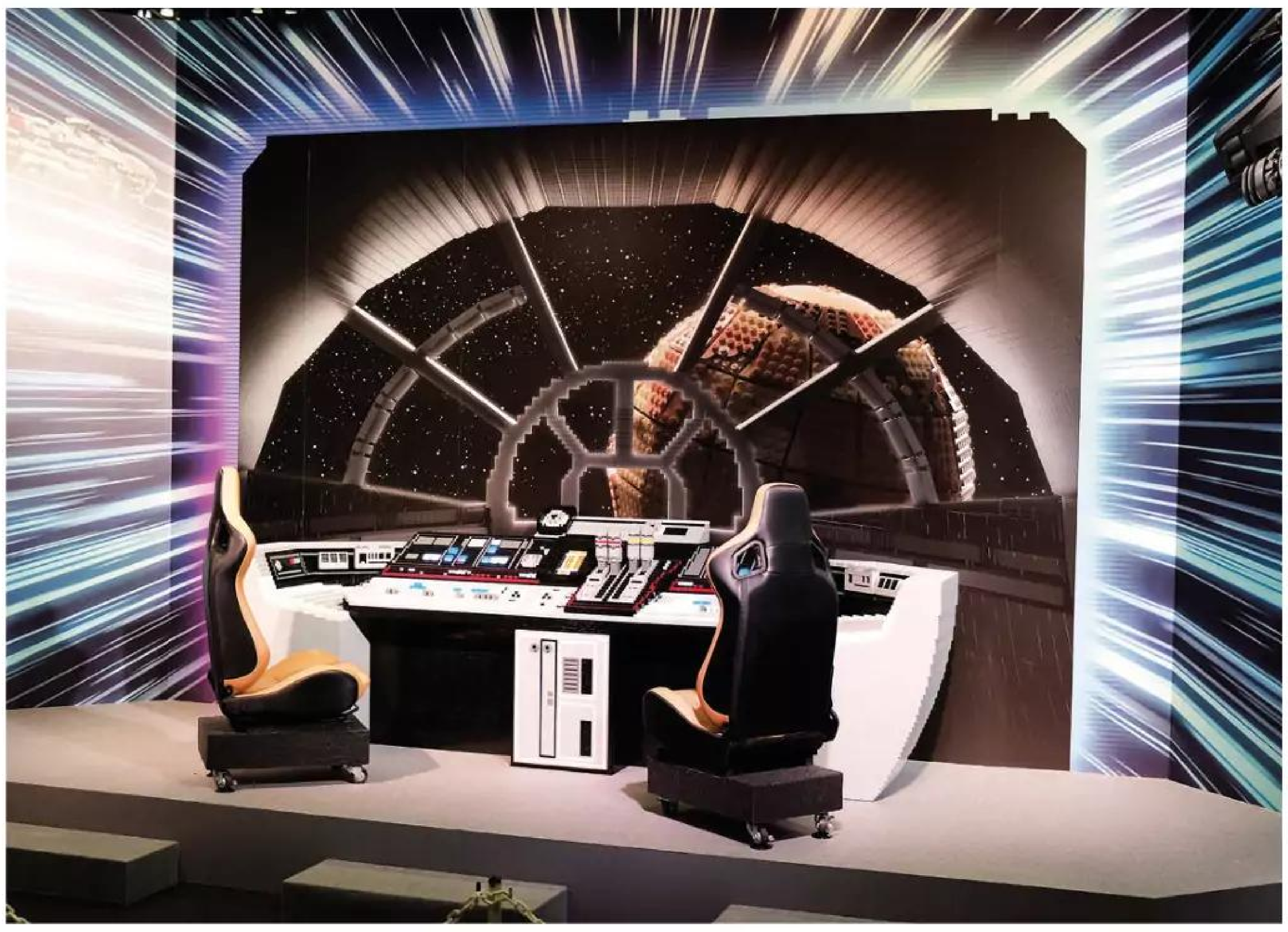
Blocks: What are you most pleased with about 75434 K-2SO, Peter?

Peter: We nailed the shape amazingly. He is known for being this larger than life, almost physics-defying design of a droid where he's so tall, his arms and legs are so long… it was great getting that translated into the LEGO System, the shaping of the legs, the waist, the chest, the head – then seeing how he stands up there with his presence, he hulks over everything else. We nailed it.

75434 K-2SO was unveiled alongside a massive version of the model at Star Wars Celebration Japan.

75399 Rebel U-wing Starfighter.





STAR WARS CELEBRATION JAPAN

The LEGO Group brought new products, hands-on activities and unique photo ops to the biggest gathering of Star Wars fans in the galaxy

Words: *Graham E. Hancock*

Star Wars Celebration, Lucasfilm's official fan convention, returned to Japan for the first time in 17 years for three days of Force-filled activity. The event saw the announcement of new projects from the studio – Starfighter (a movie starring Ryan Gosling) and Darth Maul Shadow Lord (an animated series) – and teased fans with a glimpse at next year's feature, The Mandalorian and Grogu.

As well as the big announcements, there were opportunities across the convention floor for fans to interact with their favourite Star Wars licensees. As usual, the LEGO Group brought a significant presence to the event with plenty to keep attendees busy.

The big build photo ops proved popular; a massive Millennium Falcon cockpit was cool, but not as innovative as the life-sized Speeder Bike. Fans could sit on it in front of a massive screen that gave the illusion that the ride was zooming through the woods on the Forest Moon of Endor.

Topping even the Endor setup, two costumed characters were on hand – Boba Fett and Bo-Katan Kryze. Unlike typical Star Wars cosplayers though, this duo were dressed in outfits featuring brick-built armour.

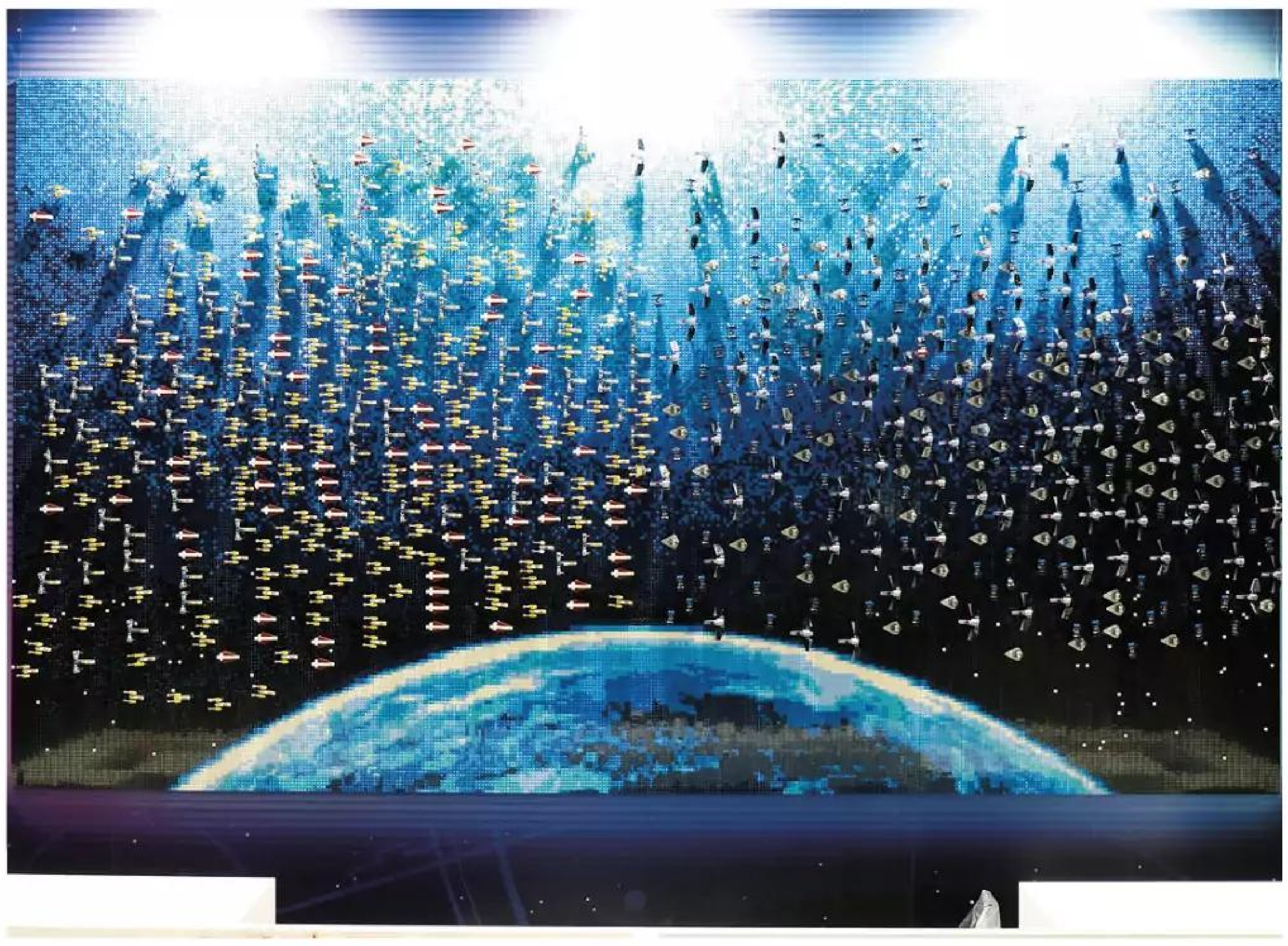
There was a store to buy LEGO products from, but the only exclusive products were gift with purchase items. Fans could choose between an event specific tile, a collection of Japan inspired LEGO Star Wars prints and a baseball cap. The deals didn't stack, which made for some tough decisions at the checkout.

It wouldn't be right if the LEGO stand didn't offer some hands-on activities, so throughout the show visitors got their hands on bricks and built small sections of a mosaic. By the end of Celebration, a huge mural depicted the Millennium Falcon attacking the Death Star, with a hint of Japanese iconography at the centre.

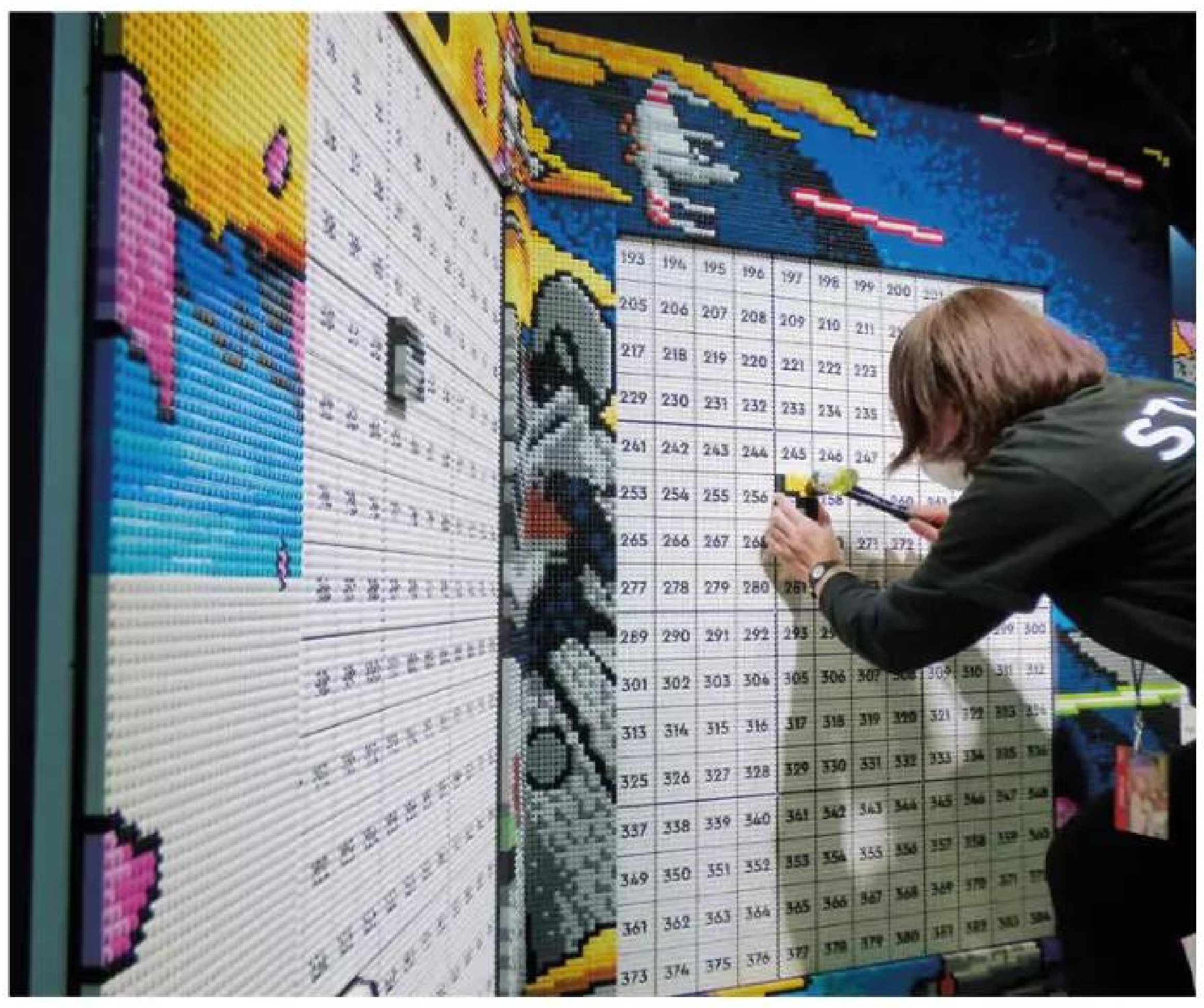
Another build station saw fans putting together small starfighters then placing them on an enormous space backdrop, capturing the impossible scale of the battle over Exegol – a truly epic sight.

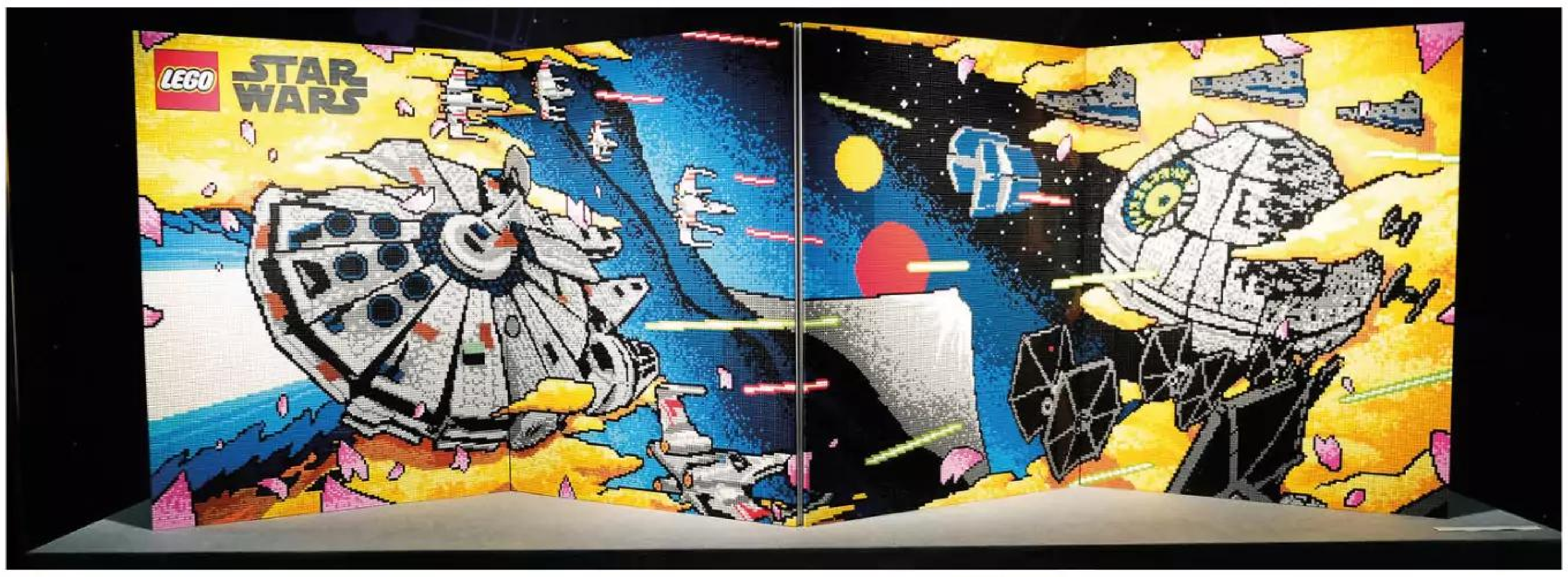
All of that activity served as the backdrop for a couple of announcements. The LEGO Star Wars design team unveiled 75434 K-2SO for the first time alongside a life-sized version of the model. On the live stage, Ahmed Best (Jar Jar Binks) and Ashley Eckstein (Ahsoka Tano) revealed the poster art for LEGO Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy Season 2, which is coming to Disney+ in September.

With so much going on and the promise of so much to come, the event served as a reminder of the staying power of LEGO Star Wars – a collaboration that shows no sign of slowing down.



LEGO
STAR WARS
POWER THE FORCE




LEGO
STAR WARS

Opposite page, clockwise from top left:
Armour made from bricks not beskar.

A brick-built Millennium Falcon cockpit.

The latest sets on display.

Ship by ship, the entire battle comes together.

Clockwise from top left:
Watch out for Scout Troopers.

The background simulates movement.

Fans can build a small section of the image.

A place to build a starfighter.

Fans queues to buy LEGO merchandise.

A fan-built prop references the video game.

Attendees choose a ship to build.

Eventually it depicts a thrilling battle.

That section is added to the larger wall.

STAR WARS
POWER THE FORCE

STAR WARS
POWER THE FORCE

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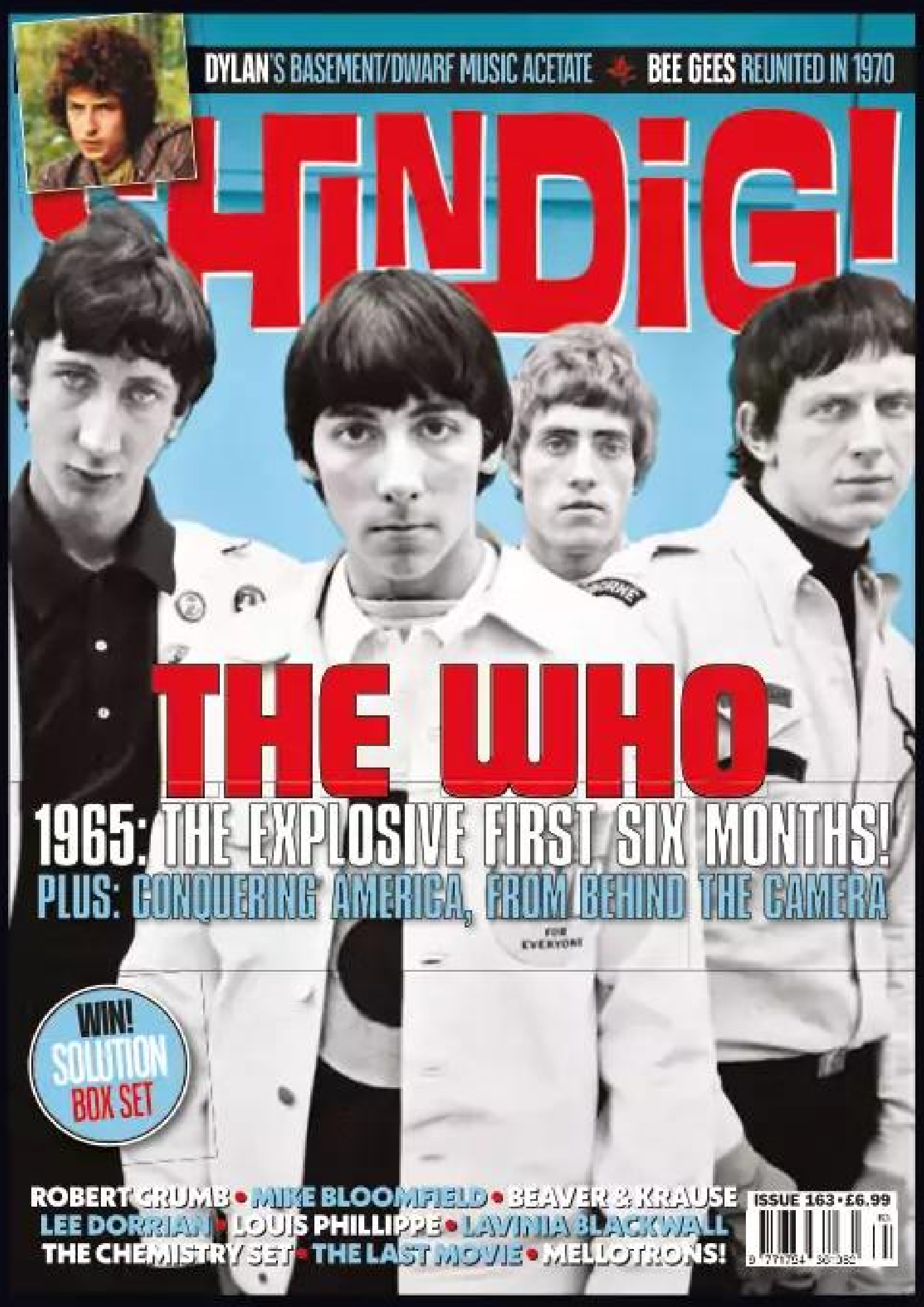

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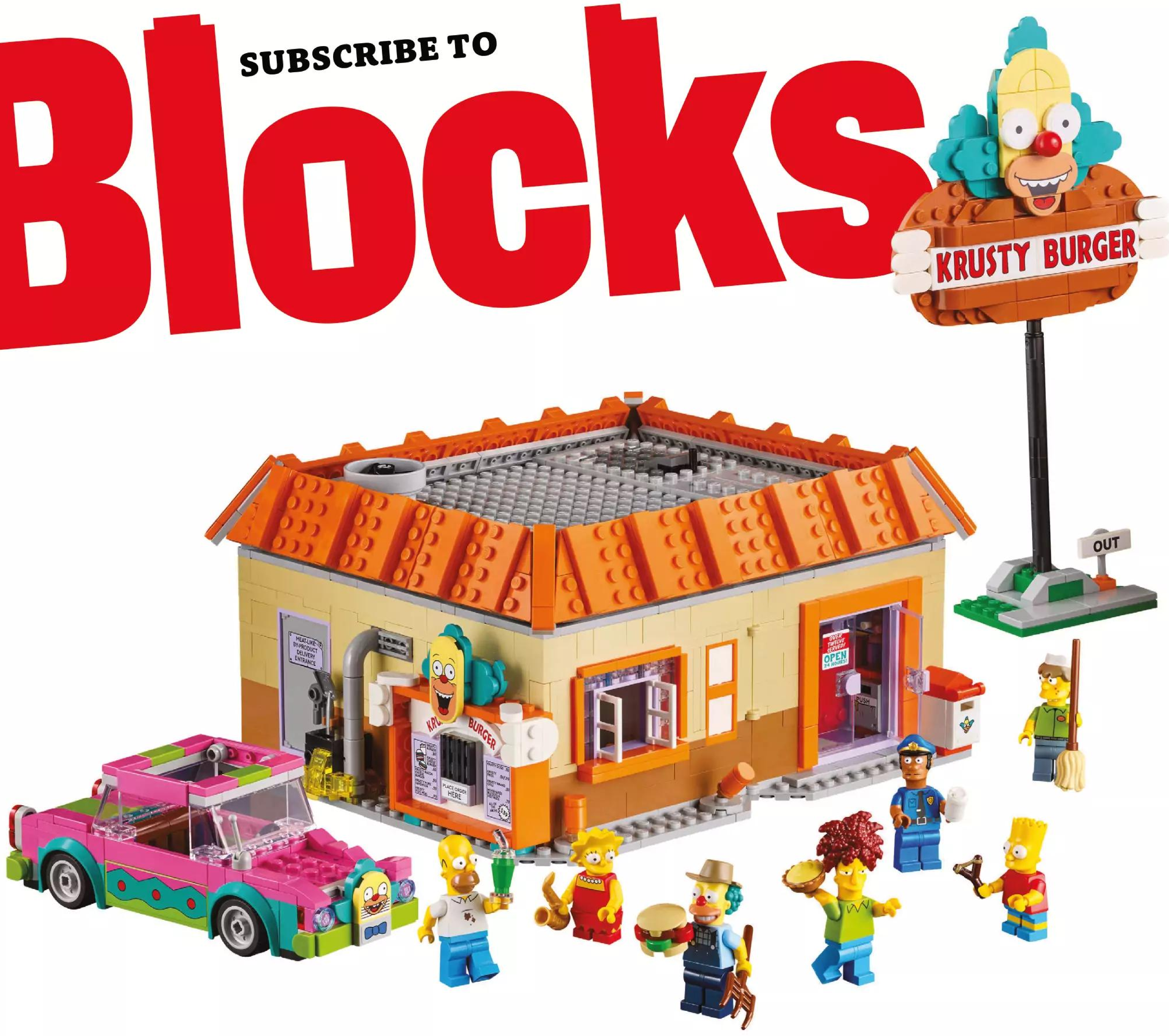


TO WIN THE NEW

THE SIMPSONS: KRUSTY BURGER

Subscribe to Blocks magazine today to be in with a chance of winning
10352 THE SIMPSONS: KRUSTY BURGER
One lucky subscriber will be drawn at random to win the set.

Everyone who subscribes to Blocks by **July 31, 2025** will gain entry into the next and all subsequent **monthly** draws. Existing subscribers will also be automatically entered into every draw. Good luck!

This competition is open to anyone who subscribes to a Blocks Magazine subscription, except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the Promotion. Each participant can only enter once during the Promotion Period. The competition will be open from 9.00am (BST) on July 3, 2025 to 5:00pm July 31, 2025 (the "Promotion Period"). Any entries outside of the Promotion Period will not be counted. One overall competition winner will be chosen by the Publisher of Blocks Magazine. The decision of the Promoter in relation to the Promotion is final. No correspondence will be entered into. No information regarding entries or judging will be disclosed to any third party not involved in the conduct of the Promotion. The prize is not transferable, re-saleable or exchangeable. There is no cash alternative. The promoter reserves the right to substitute any of the prize products subject to availability. Winners will be announced in a future issue of Blocks magazine and on our social media pages. Winners must respond to notification of their prize within 48 hours otherwise the right to claim the prize will be lost and the promoter reserves the right to re-award the prize(s). No entries from agents, third parties, organised groups or applications automatically generated by computers will be accepted. No incomplete or corrupted entries will be accepted. Any entries not in accordance with the entry instructions will be rejected. Any entries containing offensive or inappropriate content will be removed. By entering participants will be deemed to have accepted and be bound by the rules. All entry instructions form part of these Terms and Conditions. In the event of unforeseen circumstances the Promoters reserve the right to offer alternative prizes of equal or greater value. The Promoter reserves the right to amend, alter or terminate this promotion at any time due to circumstances beyond its control. The Promoter's decision is final and binding in all matters relating to the promotion. The Promoter can accept no responsibility for, and reserves the right to refuse, entries which are corrupt, incomplete or fail to arrive by the closing date. These rules are governed by English law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts. Promoter & Data Controller: Silverback Publishing Ltd

10352

Theme: *Icons /* ***Price:*** *£179.99, $209.99, €199.99 /*
Recommended age: *18+ /* ***Pieces:*** *1,635 /* ***Minifigures:*** *7*

The Simpsons: Krusty Burger

After a decade away from Springfield, it's time to get back to the blocky version of the cartoon world and visit the clown's fast food chain

GET THIS IF YOU LIKED

71006 The Simpsons House

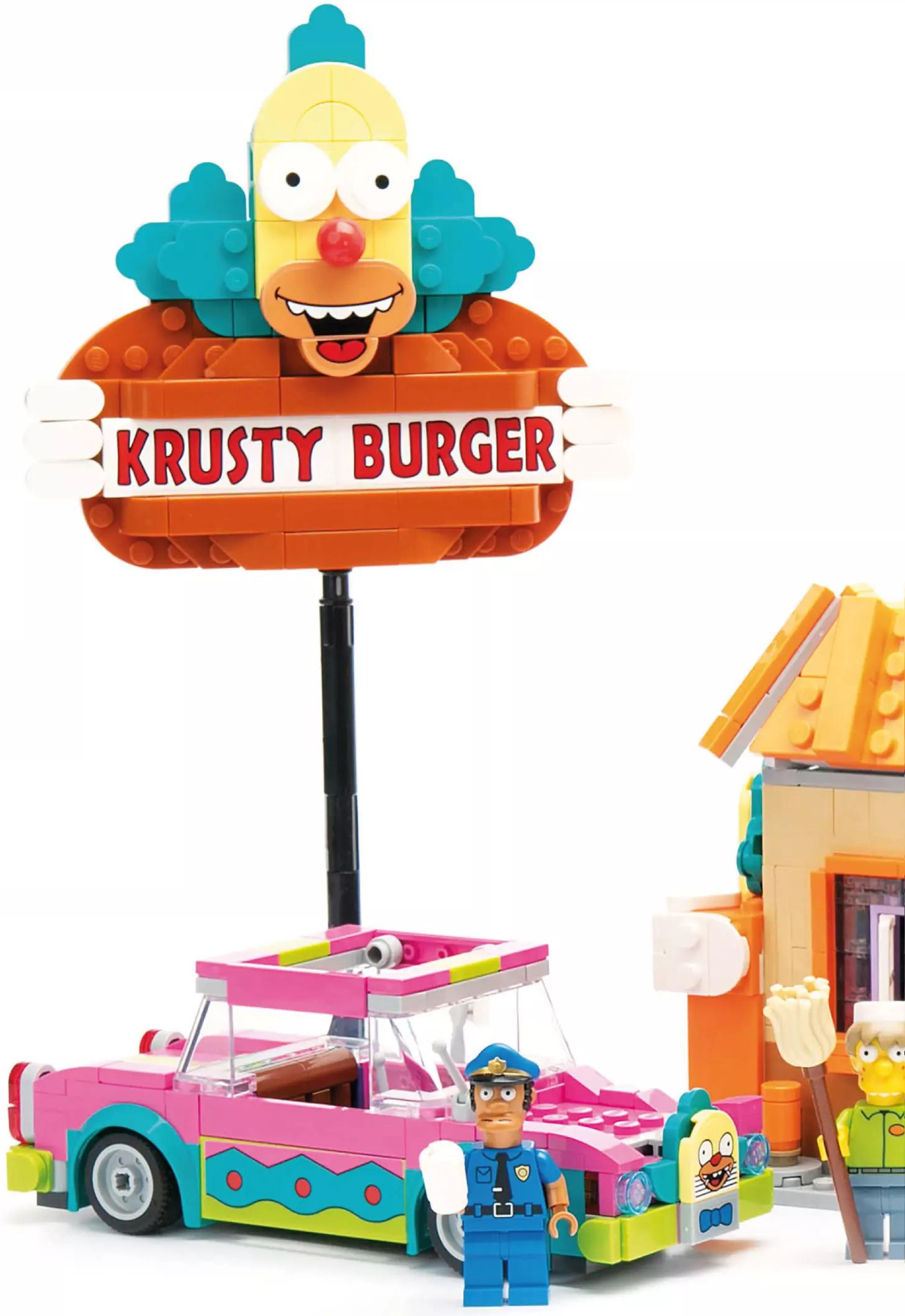
The definitive location at heart of the show defined the LEGO Group's style for these sets. That vibe has carried through to 10352 The Simpsons: Krusty Burger, with a balance of charm and detail. If you enjoyed the original set inspired by the show, you'll like the new one too.

71016 The Kwik-E-Mart

In the second set inspired by The Simpsons, the LEGO design team added more interactive aspects and crafted a set packed with play value. It's for children at heart really. If you had fun opening that model and manipulating minifigures around it, then you'll find similar value in 10352.

10260 Downtown Diner

The unique aesthetics of the Downtown Diner might be a little more upmarket than the clown-adorned burger joint, but your mileage for americana will definitely influence how appealing you find 10352 The Simpsons: Krusty Burger. If fast food and pink cars are your bag then Krusty's will fit right into your layout.



It might not be the cultural juggernaut it once was, but The Simpsons has been a mainstay of televisual entertainment for more than three decades. The longevity of the brand is such that it has already been a decade since the last time the LEGO Group paid a visit to Springfield with 71016 Kwik-E-Mart.

Making a welcome return to one of the most famous locations in the show, therefore, feels long overdue. Despite being featured in multiple episodes, the Krusty Burger restaurant was rarely used as more than a background location. This works in the LEGO design team's favour, as they can throw multiple references from these episodes into a single set without worrying too much about it having to be super accurate.

First out of the box is a brand new Homer minifigure, complete with a large stain on his white shirt from his Ribwich – a nod to the Season 14 episode "I'm Spelling as Fast as I Can". The torso print is great and the dual printed arms make convincing short sleeves. The familiar head moulds have been dusted off (thankfully the style from "Brick Like Me" did not catch on in physical products), which means collectors can snap up this latest incarnation of the famous yellow family as well as the debuts of some other popular characters.

Homer's pink car is the first build; this car isn't the standard family vehicle, however, and instead is the clown car version from the Season 6 classic, "Homie the Clown". The six-stud wide frame is remarkably complex, using multiple stud jumpers to create the side-by-side seating and SNOT brackets to provide attachment points for tiles to form a rudimentary chassis.

The front of the car overlaps new modified 2x2 plates with curve to create a convincing Krusty the Clown face on the front grille. It's a technique used to good effect across the entire set. The bow tie licence plate, clown face, decorative panels and pretty much every other detail are applied through stickers. This is something that is common across the entire set. While the appearance of a sticker sheet is no surprise, the complete lack of any new printed elements (the only printed decoration in the entire set, aside from on the minifigures, is a 1x1 tile with a number pad print) feels disappointing.

The clown car has a superfluous opening boot play feature, but captures the aesthetic of the TV version pretty well, and the design makes perfect sense alongside the rest of the Krusty-themed set.

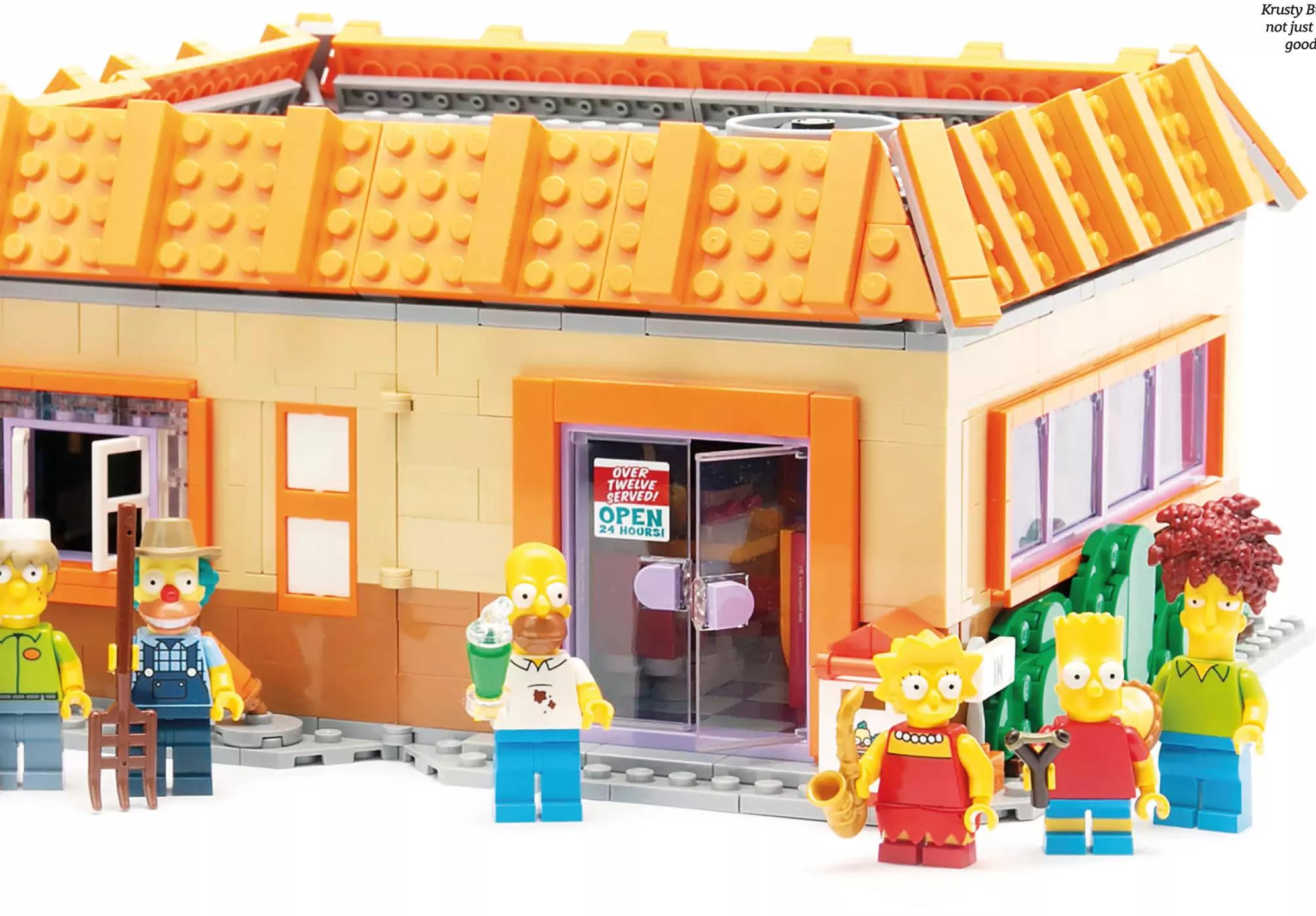
The main building is separated into sections. The final build hinges on two sides to open outwards, allowing interior access and neatly closing up to resemble the on-screen design closely.

The first section is the drive thru window and kitchen area. Orange tiles are mounted vertically to surround the restaurant's windows, providing a neat outline against the light tan walls. The order point is a brilliant design, using white curved tiles and the same modified plates from Homer's car to create an eerily good Krusty face looming over the speaker point.

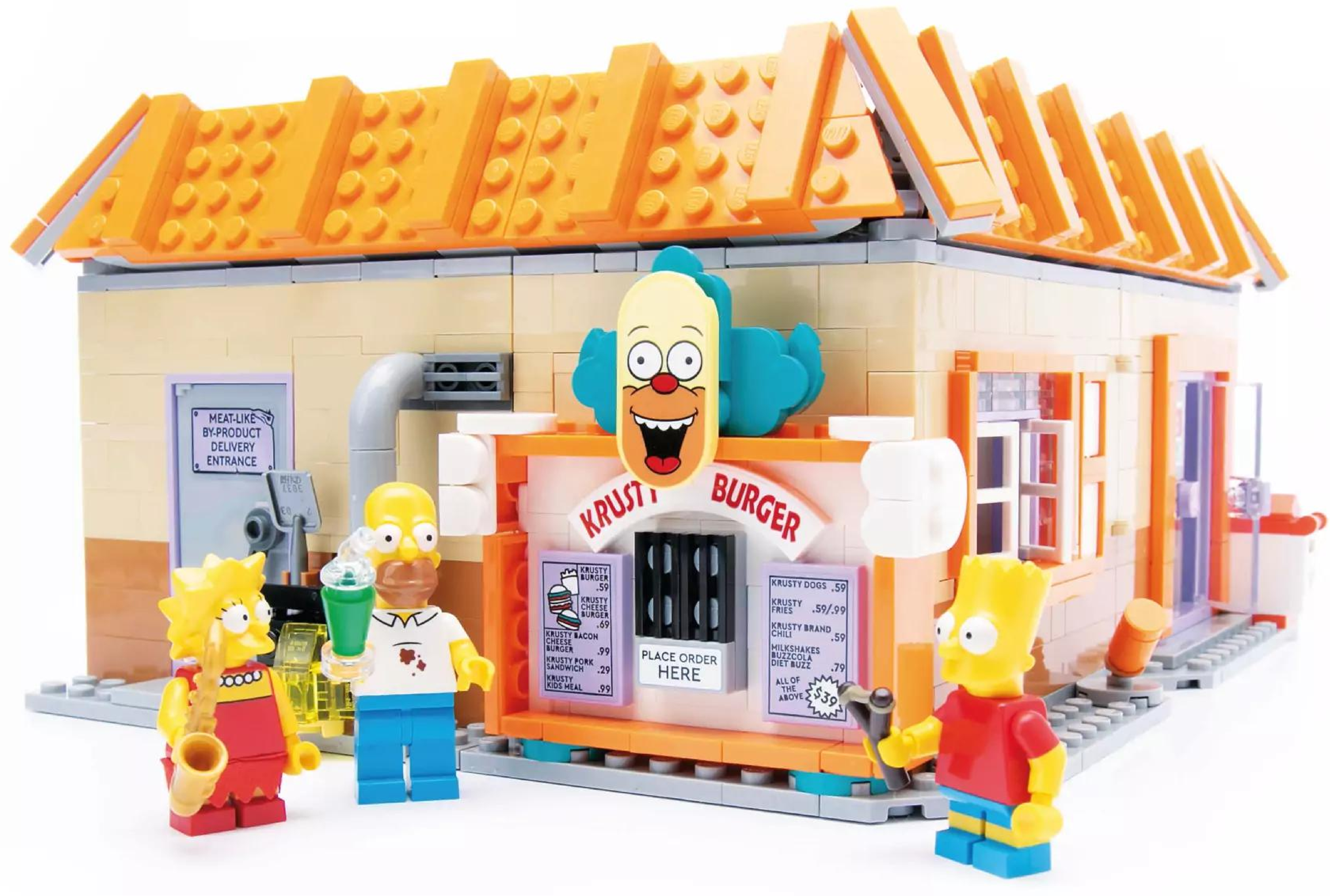
The menus on either side of the speaker, the curved banner and the clown face are all nicely detailed stickers. The colour matching against the elements they're stuck to is reasonably good.

Inside the restaurant there is a drinks dispenser and an oven next to the serving hatch; this compact space is nicely constructed. There is also a space for the restroom. One of the most intricately constructed lavatory and sink combinations that have graced a LEGO set in recent years (and there have been a few) is nicely complemented by details such as the flower element taps, overflowing sink and empty paper roll holder (great use of a tan Technic pin). The Squeaky Voiced Teen is attending this section, who looks great in his employee uniform with mop in hand.

The garish chequerboard tiling and large windows dominate the main restaurant area. Clever use of overlaid green curves underneath these windows makes for very Simpsons-esque shrubbery. More smart constructions are found inside, with a nicely formed curved banquette



Krusty Burger: It's not just good, it's good enough!


MEAT-LIKE BY-PRODUCT DELIVERY ENTRANCE
KRUSTY BURGER
PLACE ORDER HERE
KRUSTY BURGER .59
KRUSTY CHEESE BURGER .69
KRUSTY BACON CHEESE BURGER .99
KRUSTY PORK SANDWICH .29
KRUSTY KIDS MEAL .99
KRUSTY DOGS .59
KRUSTY FRIES .59/.99
KRUSTY BRAND CHILI .59
MILKSHAKES BUZZCOLA DIET BUZZ .79
ALL OF THE ABOVE $39

Left: *"Give me 700 Krusty Burgers."*

Below left: *The burgers are 100% beef... flavoured*

Bottom left: *There is no paper left.*

Right: *New characters join The Simpsons minifigure cast.*

Below right: *The secret sauce is mayonnaise that has been left out in the sun.*

KRUSTY'S KIDZ ZONE
GRILL

NEXT ORDER
700 KRUSTY BURGERS

KRUSTY BURGER

TWELVE SERVED!
OPEN
24

seating area and another Krusty-themed and appropriately horrific-looking Kidz Zone (little more than a ball pit). This central section of the restaurant covers the entire width of the floor plan, then the drive thru and bathroom area is attached by a hinge on one side, with the main kitchen and counter on the other.

Various brick-built appliances are mounted inside the kitchen, with the standout feature being a hideous deep-fat fryer that spills its disgusting yellow grease at the rear of the restaurant next to the delivery entrance. It's a gloriously gross and accurate detail, including some excellent parts usage – who had noticed that minifigure claws look like french fries?! The exterior of the kitchen is understandably plain compared to the front of the restaurant, but some more stickers with various Simpsons references make it feel more authentic.

The Season 20 episode "Coming to Homerica" is one of the key inspirations for the restaurant; it's quite a politically charged episode, but the trigger point is a new plant-based Krusty Burger endorsed by the eponymous clown in farmer attire. The minifigure does justice to the episode and is only upstaged by the new characters making their debut in LEGO form.

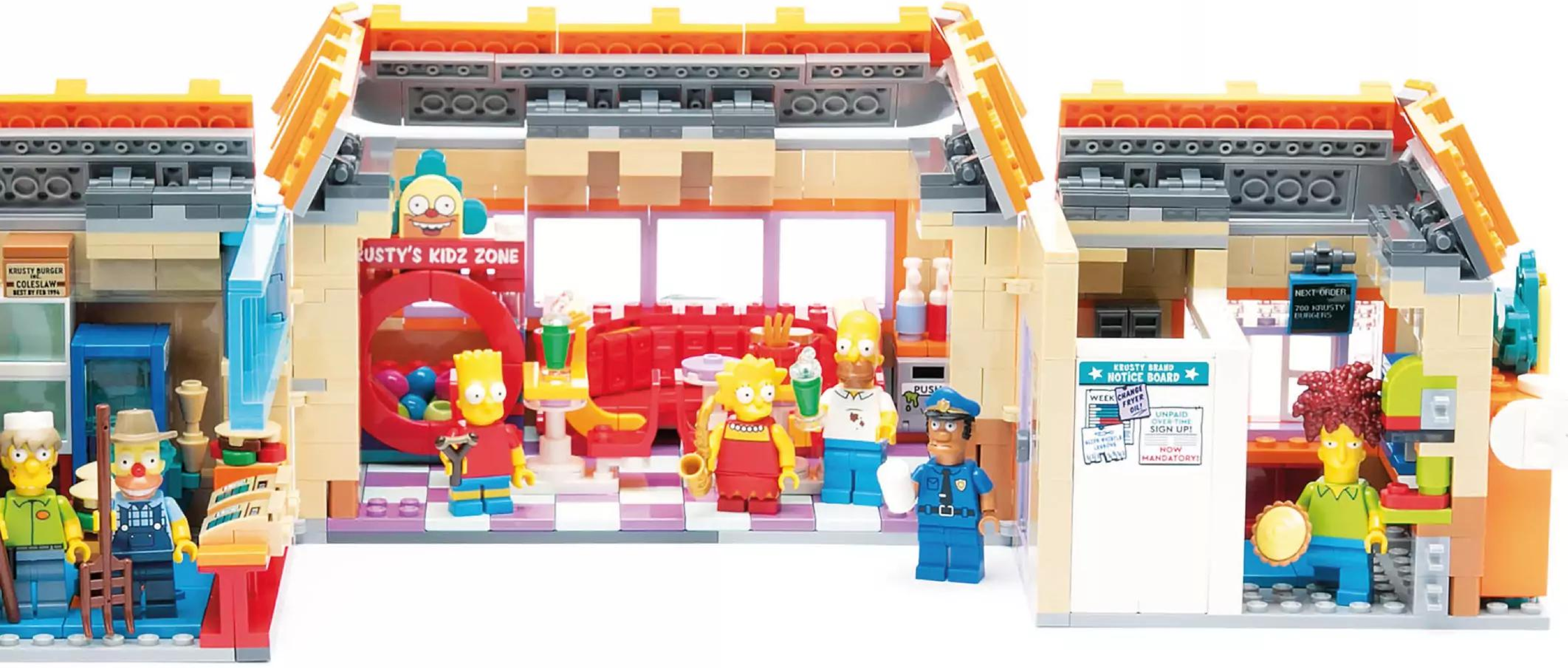
Alongside Bart and Lisa, Officer Lou makes a welcome addition to the roster, but is upstaged by the inclusion of Sideshow Bob. His pineapple-like hair and that unnerving smug smile are brilliantly executed. The inclusion of a custard pie is a nice touch, although a garden rake may have been even more fun.

The large Krusty Burger signage completes the build, looming high above the restaurant with its bright red nose and toothy grin. It helps to bring the set together and doesn't feel tacked on as these additional builds often do.

The restaurant is packed full of fun details, with some nice mini builds and clever parts usage. It's recognisable as the on-screen location and the choice of minifigures is well-considered. Where the set falls short is the reliance on stickers. Fans often get frustrated that display sets are not sticker-free; that may be an impractical or prohibitively expensive aim, but the lack of printed elements here will do nothing to improve the perception. If you can live with the labels though, this is an enjoyable build that captures the feel of The Simpsons.

DAVE CARTLIDGE

Verdict
76
This enjoyable and engaging build includes some great parts usage, fun techniques and an excellent roster of minifigures. It's a shame about the heavy sticker count.

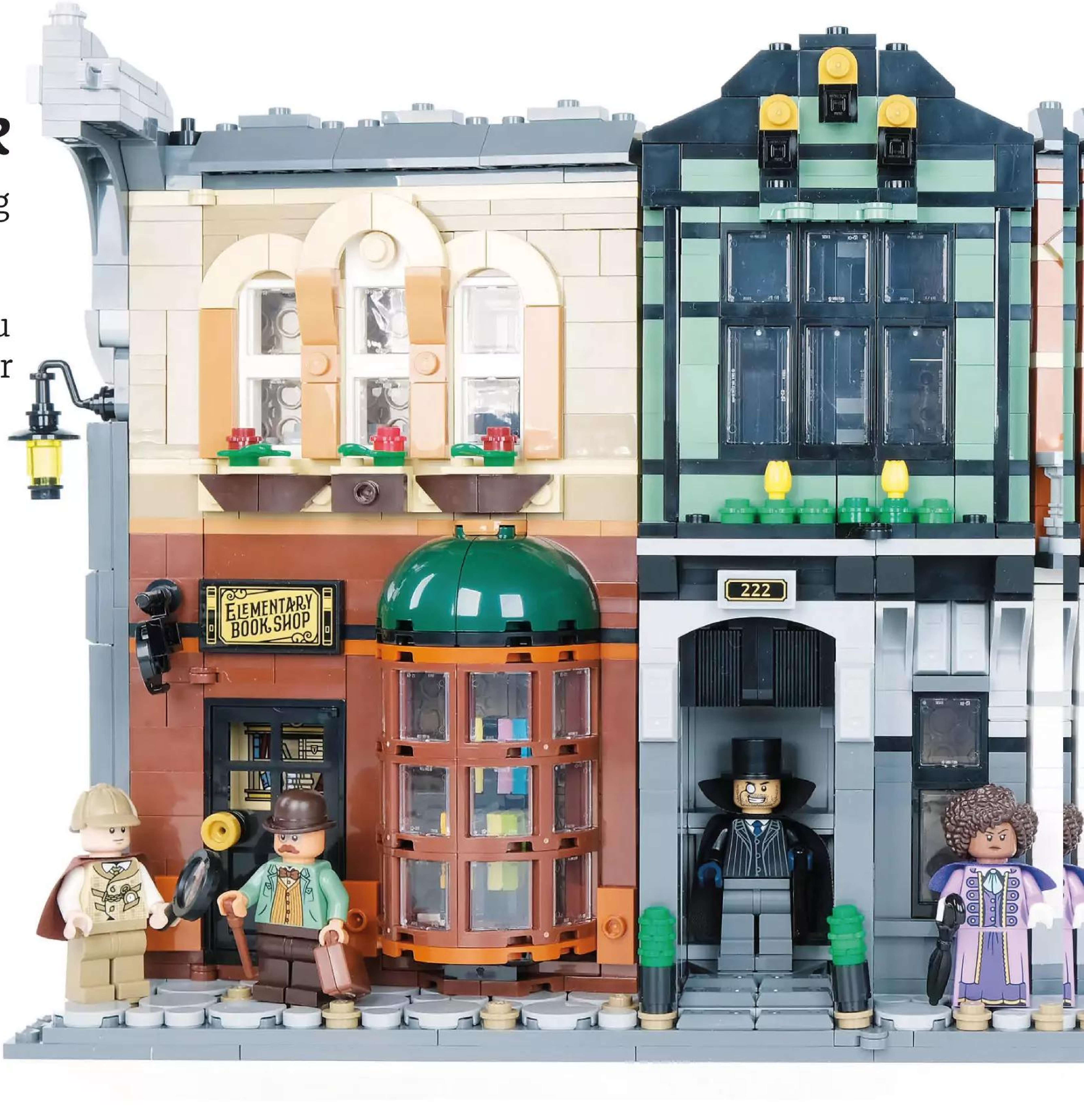

KRUSTY BURGER COLESLAW BEST BY FEB 1994
USTY'S KIDZ ZONE
PUSH
KRUSTY BRAND NOTICE BOARD
WEEK
CHANGE FRYER OIL!
UNPAID OVER-TIME SIGN UP!
NOW MANDATORY!
NEXT ORDER
700 KRUSTY BURGERS

10351

Theme: *Icons* / ***Price:*** *£109.99, $129.99, €119.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *1,359* / ***Minifigures:*** *5*

Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook

When you are starting a series of sets to display with books, what character do you start with? The answer is elementary, my dear reader



Arthur Conan Doyle's detective is one of fiction's most enduring characters, continually inspiring new adaptations and interpretations of the original Sherlock Holmes stories. While literature has not often been source material for LEGO sets when there is no specific movie adaptation in mind, the new collection of book nooks is a very suitable place to start.

This new concept offers a tiny world for readers to build, which will sit between their books and allow them to peek inside and see what is going on in this miniature setting. Through the use of hinge joints, 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook also opens out, so the entire location can be displayed in a more visible way.

Book nooks are charming traditional decorations that display really nicely on bookshelves – and there is logic to the LEGO Group exploring them, as minifigure scale in particular is perfectly suited to creating an intriguing scene that draws the eye.

Building this set is good fun; there are two sides of the scene to build that, when combined, make up Baker Street. The book effect is then built onto the outside.

For the most part it's straightforward to put together, with some nice little touches providing clever-clever moments. The angles of the wall sections are particularly neat, as they both give the impression of an old, uneven London street whilst also ensuring that the finished closed book nook has depth.

Putting the silhouette of Sherlock Holmes on the 'cover' is a smile-inducing part of the build, as absolutely perfect element selection leads to an unmistakable shape forming to represent the character.

The functions are also fun to construct – turning one of the chimney stacks opens a hidden door, which reveals the villain Moriarty, giving the build some interactivity. The turning window for the book shop doesn't make a huge amount of sense though.

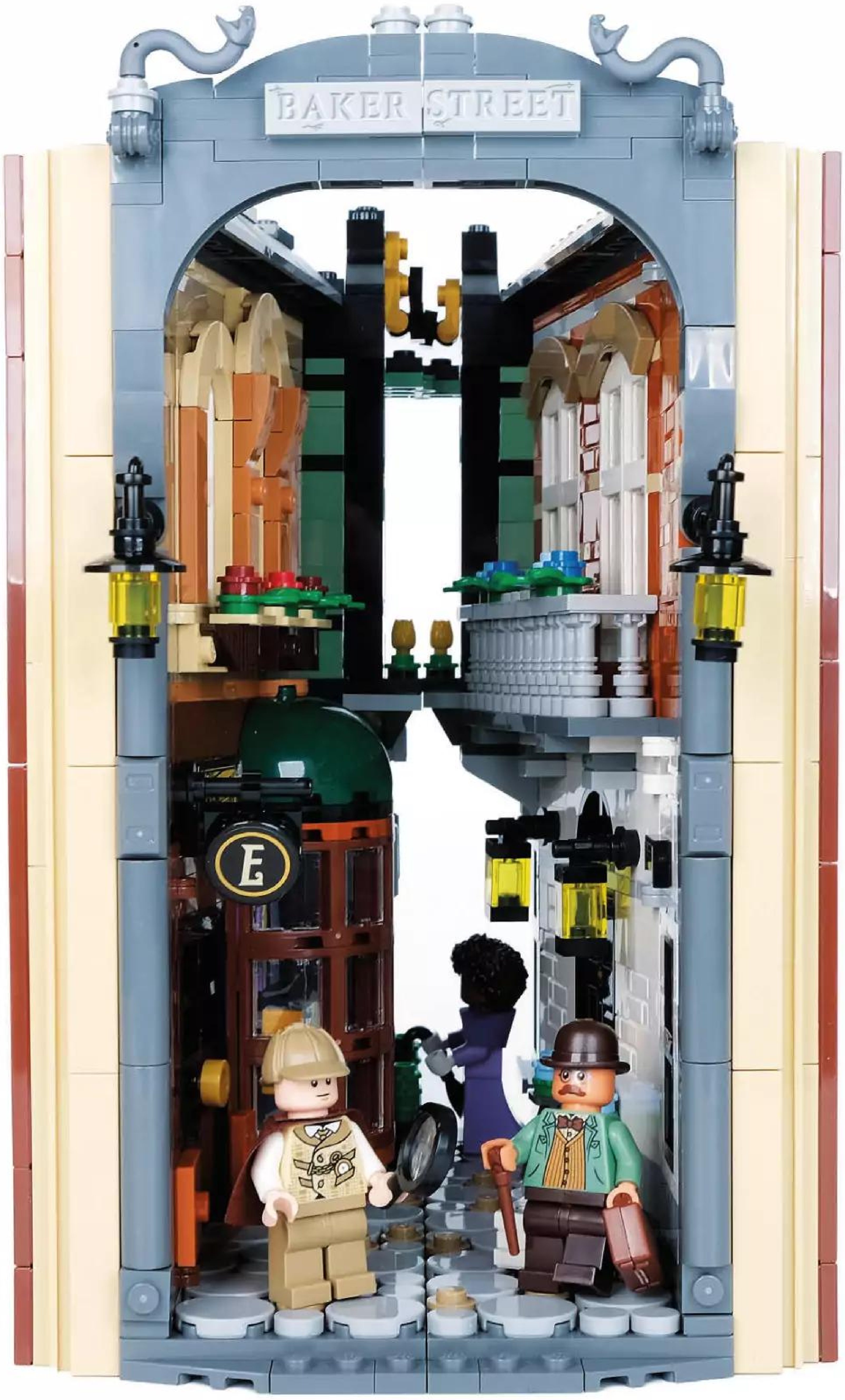
There are also doors that open, revealing interiors full of Holmes references. Considering these are just a couple of studs deep, that any brick-built details are included is impressive; most of the interior detail work is done by stickers though.

Five minifigures come in the set; naturally, the consulting detective is the star of the model. He has the perfect hat element and a beautifully detailed torso, not giving a sense of any specific screen depiction of the character, including all of the key traits that readers associate with him. The magnifying glass accessory is wonderful and as pleasingly oversized as ever.

***Far left:** Moriarty skulks in a doorway as Holmes and Watson investigate.*

***Below:** The set can slot on a shelf between books.*

221B
MORIARTY



Watson is a really fun minifigure, with a fantastic moustache and lovely jacket/waistcoat combo. Moriarty is nice but not particularly noteworthy, while the additional characters are essential to fill out the scene and are well designed, but lack the familiarity of the star trio.

The completed model looks great, encouraging you to peer more closely. It captures the claustrophobic, haphazard feel that novels set in old London evoke – your mind's eye adds the smog. No set would benefit more from atmospheric lighting.

When displayed open, the model is even more attractive as you can truly admire the intricacy. Cobbled floors, textured walls, ornate window frames and a mix of colours create a street that is detailed without being too busy. By giving it a little depth, it doesn't feel flat or unreal – it feels like there is more going on behind the walls. Placing the minifigures is a treat, as they look right at home on the Baker Street backdrop.

It leads to a dilemma – how necessary are big, ornate modular buildings when a street can be offered in a way that is so much easier to display? Of course this is no replacement for a detailed, full building – but if you rarely remove the floors from a modular and mainly use it as a backdrop, then this might be a space and budget saving alternative.

When considering that though, some of the set's limitations become apparent. The walls are built in a very traditional way, without the SNOT accoutrements that give modular buildings their much more detailed facades. It has the beautiful composition of those sets but without the same level of complexity.

That is because the set isn't intended as a replacement for modulars; it's intended to be a book nook. It's a charming new approach to a LEGO set and whether you should add it to your collection depends on what you are looking for.

If you want to add this to an existing layout, you'll have to do some serious building to modify and expand it. If you are happy with this as a self-contained world to exist between your books or have open space at the back of a shelf, then you will be satisfied with this approach. New concepts take some adjusting to – but they're easy to get on board with when they are as well executed as this.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

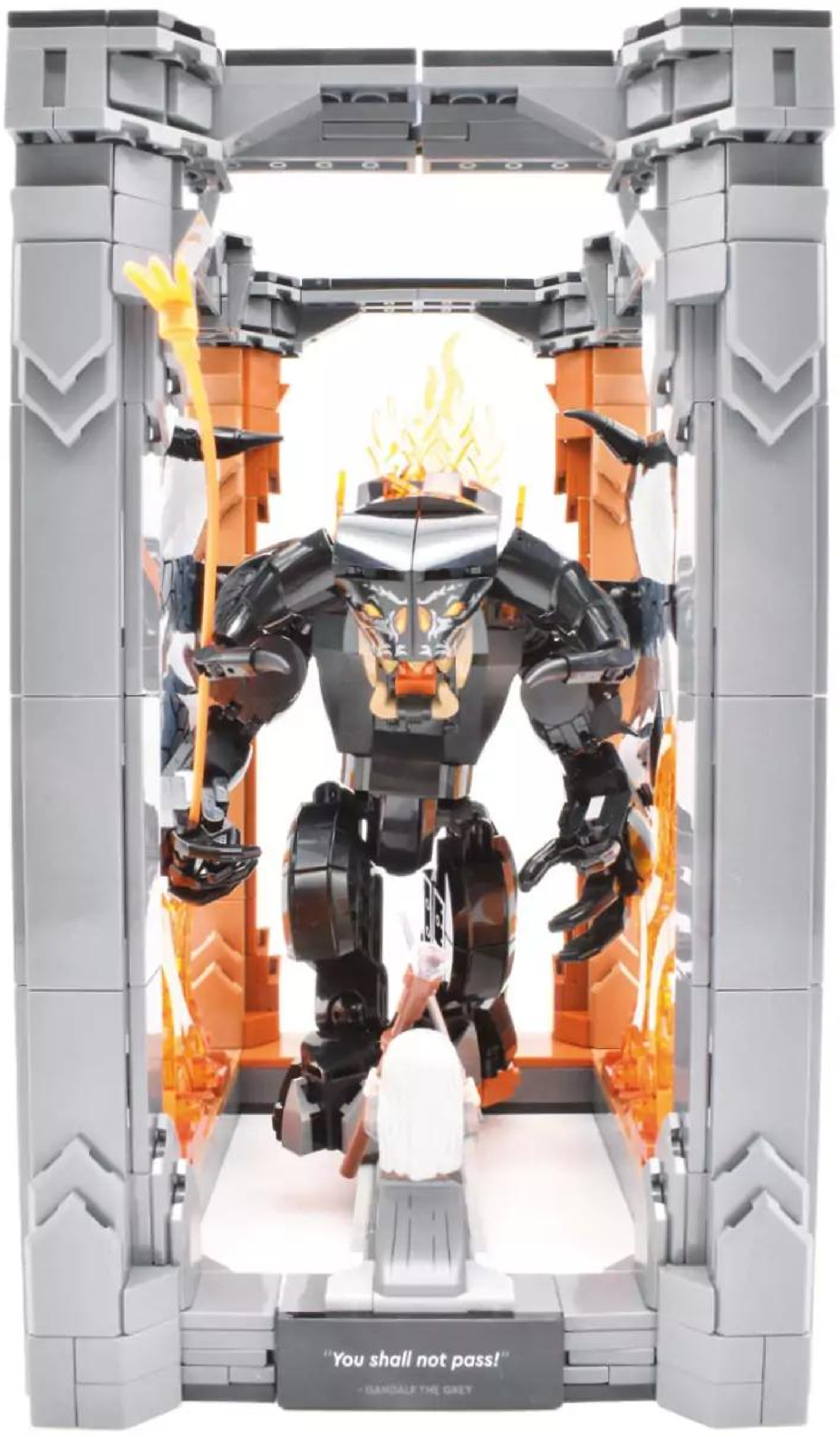
Verdict
74
This new concept is well executed and is a novel way to display a LEGO model. It won't be for those who desire a fuller London diorama though.

10367

Theme: Icons / **Price:** £109.99, $129.99, €119.99 /
Recommended age: 18+ / **Pieces:** 1,201 / **Minifigures:** 1

The Lord of the Rings: Balrog Book Nook

Minifigure Gandalf finally faces off against the Balrog in a new format from LEGO Icons



Whilst the return of LEGO The Lord of the Rings has been met (for the most part) with praise, one gap has been the provision of smaller models. Aside from BrickHeadz, the story's cheapest set since its revival is the just released 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire, with a £229.99 price tag. The arrival of 10367 The Lord of the Rings: Balrog Book Nook certainly feels opportune, heralding potentially a new direction for the franchise, although its £109.99 price tag perhaps isn't quite what fans had in mind.

This is one of a smattering of book nooks. Unfortunately, on the face of it, this one looks to be the emptiest. 10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook has the full façade of Baker Street, whilst 76450 Book Nook: Hogwarts Express is enclosed by the walls of King's Cross train station.

The issue with 10367 is that the scene it depicts takes place on the bridge of Khazad-dûm, which is described by J. R. R. Tolkien (and depicted on screen) as purposefully narrow, surrounded by a black chasm. It's hardly the inspiration for a detailed LEGO model.

The designers have done what they can. Layered pentagonal tiles at the top and bottom of the four pillars plus a few angled tiles at the top nicely hint towards the dwarven architecture. The colour change from nougat to dark orange in the centre effectively recreates the Balrog's fearsome appearance. Inevitably, constructing the frame is repetitive, as each pillar must be built then attached to the frame.

For a set of this size, one minifigure seems steep, but there's no space for any others. More's the pity, then, that this Gandalf is largely the same as the one included in 10354 The Lord of the Rings: The Shire. A tattered, dirty design with some singed details would have been much more appropriate. A brick-built staff is included, but a new piece would have added value.

This isn't the first time the Balrog has been depicted in LEGO form. No, not the BrickHeadz model in 40631 Gandalf the Grey & Balrog, but in 2012's LEGO The Lord of the Rings game. Comparing this figure with his video game iteration is a bit unflattering because whilst his all-black look contrasts well against the trans-orange flame pieces here, there are just not enough burning details.

The video game Balrog was alive with orange accents all over his body, which might have been too much here (plus, of course, the game designers were able to highlight and accentuate these molten cracks in a way that could never been replicated in physical brick form). But the comparison with the digital iteration isn't completely unfair – 76289 Thor vs. Surtur Construction Figure proved how a few orange pieces and prints can create a suitably flaming and demonic effect.

The issue here lies in the lack of printed pieces or even a few stickers just to add some detail. The wings are reused from 40693 The Lord of the Rings: Fell Beast and whilst they're serviceable, printing a few orange accents along the sinews and folds would have gone a long way.

However, there are things to praise about the figure – to start with, the scale is excellent. The Balrog is both bulky and solidly built. Once placed in the nook it looks accurately sized compared to the diminutive Gandalf.

"You shall not pass!"
- GANDALF THE GREY

Far left: *10367 is one of three book nooks releasing this summer.*

Left: *Gandalf's famous phrase is printed on a tile.*

Below: *This is the first scaled LEGO Balrog.*

The head is also very well done, with a trans-orange plate inside the mouth giving just a hint of the creature's flaming power. It also has some great articulation and the wings are designed to open smoothly with the nook to reveal the Balrog's imposing strength. The result is a Balrog who looks good, but some tweaks would be even better.

Some might feel that it's actually the book nook form that holds 10367 back, but aside from a cavernous multi-thousand-piece model, this is probably the most effective way of translating this scene into a LEGO set. There's a bit of an irony in having Gandalf's famous quotation, "You shall not pass", blazoned on the very front of the model as it almost does fall foul of not quite achieving what LEGO The Lord of the Rings fans have been waiting for since the theme's first outing a decade ago.

A bit of disappointment with this model is justified, especially given the price – but the shaping and forced perspective of Gandalf facing down the Balrog is undeniably awesome. If you see it discounted, grab your fiery whip and don't let the opportunity to add it to your collection pass you by.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

You shall not pass!

Verdict **65** **Fans have waited for a full LEGO Balrog for years – this one could be better, but buying the set at a decent discount will soften the disappointment.**

10363

Theme: *Icons* / ***Price:*** *£54.99, $49.99, €59.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *493* / ***Minifigures:*** *1*

Leonardo Da Vinci's Flying Machine

Leonardo Da Vinci is renowned for his Renaissance paintings, his enigmatic portraits and detailed anatomical sketches. He was also obsessed with the idea of flight. He was convinced that a machine could make it possible for a person to soar through the sky. Of the numerous designs and prototypes, his flying machine – or ornithopter – was the closest he ever got to this seemingly impossible dream. It's a mechanical marvel to build, but this set feels like a conundrum.

Da Vinci created around 500 sketches surrounding his ideas for flight and flying machines, all of which were designed to be made with materials available at that time – wood and stretched fabric. This is replicated perfectly throughout the model via an array of brown tones, with a lot of attention on how each piece imitates carved wood. There are many harsh angles and exposed joints to show that this is a concept that was being put together with nails and glue.

Inside is relatively hollow space to allow a person to lie down and pilot the machine. Obviously there is no suggestion of a power source as it relied on human strength alone. This is one of the reasons the original prototype never flew more than a few feet off the ground – and ultimately crashed. This model feels similarly precarious. The hollow interior and relatively thin supports make it extremely delicate when building. Too much pressure on one connection can cause a whole section of parts to crumble, which leads to a frustratingly slow build.

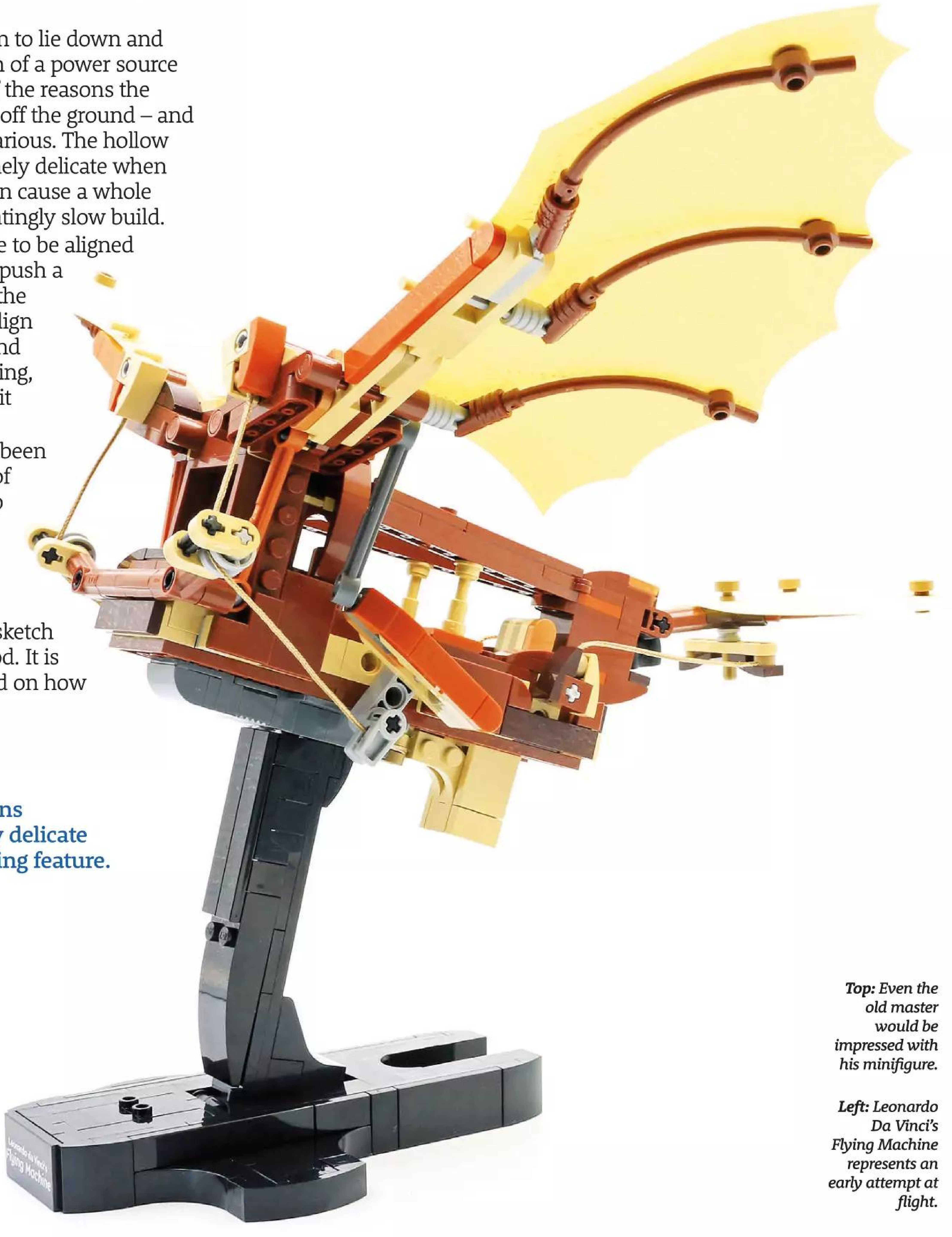
This is made worse by the wing joints. They have to be aligned perfectly in either pairs or sets of three, so you can push a Technic pin through to hold them together so that the mechanism will work later. Getting everything to align and not pushing the pin too strongly is not easy. And that's before attaching the string to connect each wing, where you need to keep tension the entire time so it doesn't slip out of its grooves.

There is no denying that this famous sketch has been skillfully translated into a LEGO set – but it is a lot of work for a model that simply has the wings flap up and down at the touch of the trigger.

The unique Leonardo Da Vinci minifigure is desirable, but reminds that the finished machine isn't minifigure scale. It is not the most attractive display piece either, because it's based on a pencil sketch and supposed to evoke something made from wood. It is striking and unique, but its appeal will truly depend on how much interest you have in the Renaissance.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict
65
An incredibly unique concept for an Icons model is sadly marred by a frustratingly delicate build that results in only a simple working feature.



Top: *Even the old master would be impressed with his minifigure.*

Left: *Leonardo Da Vinci's Flying Machine represents an early attempt at flight.*

76972

Theme: Jurassic World / **Price:** £29.99, $39.99, €34.99 /
Recommended age: 6+ / **Pieces:** 285 / **Minifigures:** 2

Raptor Off-Road Escape

Jurassic Park is a movie packed with memorable moments, which makes it incredibly difficult to name them – after all, at a certain point the entire film becomes so iconic that you are basically listing its shots. But when Robert Muldoon faces his demise, it's at the claws of a Velociraptor that pops out of a bush.

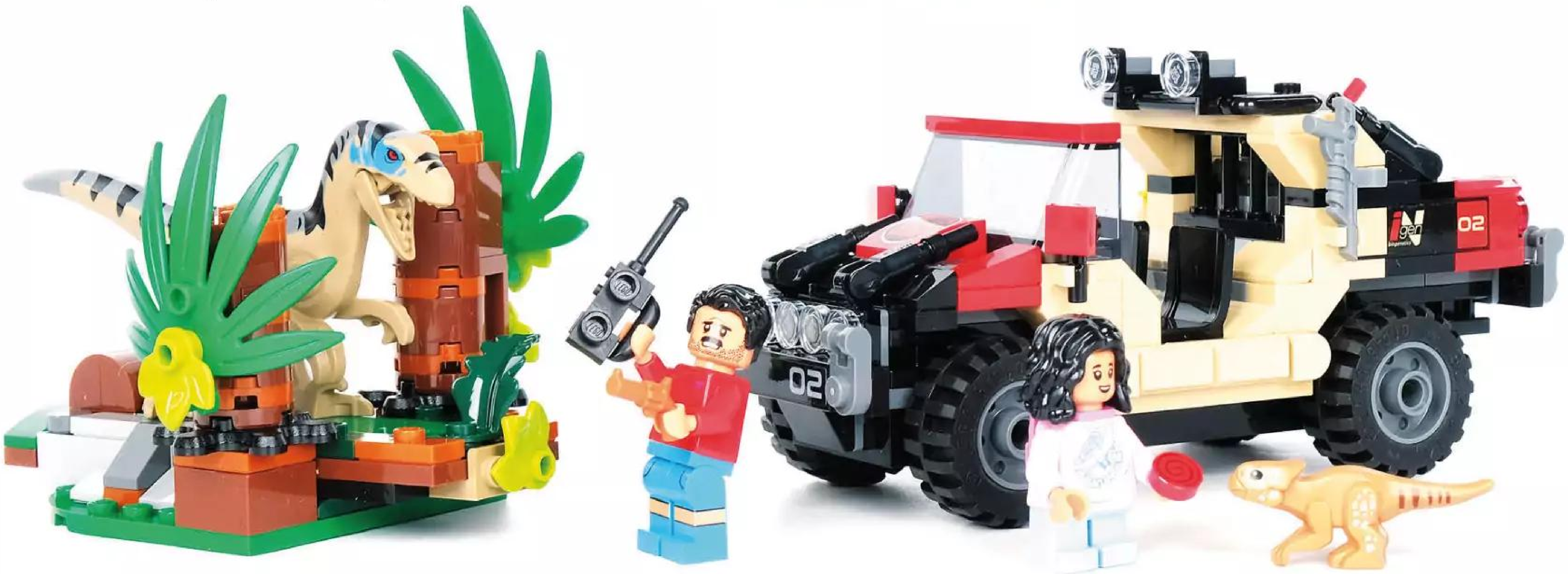
Despite this model being just 285 pieces, it might have better captured the essence of the Jurassic series than any other LEGO set. At their core, these movies are about dinosaurs jumping out and eating people. 76972 set delivers just that in an elegantly simple function that has a Raptor move forward as foliage parts. It's tremendously fun and perfect for the subject matter.

The jeep is a great build too. It's fun to put the chunky off roader together. When complete it has a functional, slightly angular aesthetic that contrasts with the natural environment it exists in.

Past baby dinosaurs in the theme have been fun, but have also been rather cutesy – the same can't be said of the baby Aquilops included here, which feels authentic to the design of LEGO creatures. It's nice to get a unique creature even in one of the theme's smaller models.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
68
Yes, the car is very well designed – but it's the overgrown section of the build that captures everything that is great about a Jurassic movie.



Some dino encounters are more pleasant than others.

76975

Theme: Jurassic World / **Price:** £44.99, $49.99, €49.99 /
Recommended age: 5+ / **Pieces:** 199 / **Minifigures:** 2

T. rex River Escape

Despite Jurassic World Rebirth not looking like a movie for five-year-olds, 76975 T. rex River Escape directly takes inspiration from a sequence glimpsed in the trailer.

That scene, one that screenwriter David Koepp took from the original Jurassic Park novel, has a group attempting to escape from a T. rex in a dingy. This simple set builds a little bit of a waterfront structure with a rocky section – that natural part of the model hides a function that allows you to launch the boat away from the shore. It's unbelievably simple for how effective it is and great fun.

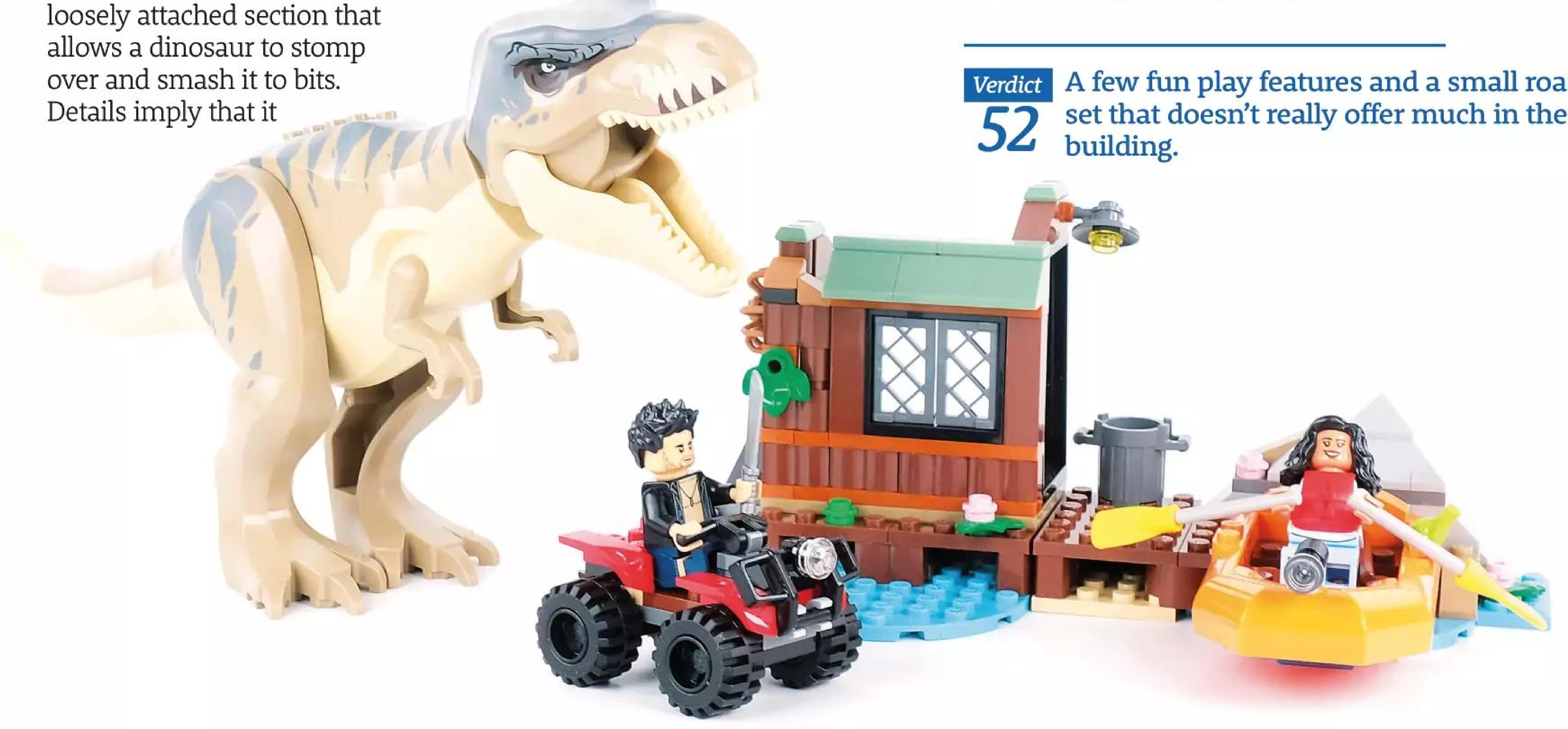
Where the building shines is in the loosely attached section that allows a dinosaur to stomp over and smash it to bits. Details imply that it is an abandoned outpost, but there isn't much to it at all.

The T. rex is the same mould that has been around for years with new patterning – if you have one of the previous king of the tyrant lizards, this is not a must own.

However, Teresa Delgado and Xavier Dobbs are only available in this particular set, so if you are looking to get the entire cast of characters from the new movie, you do need to add this model to your collection. That's rather frustrating, as the price point makes this one you'll be inclined to skip.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

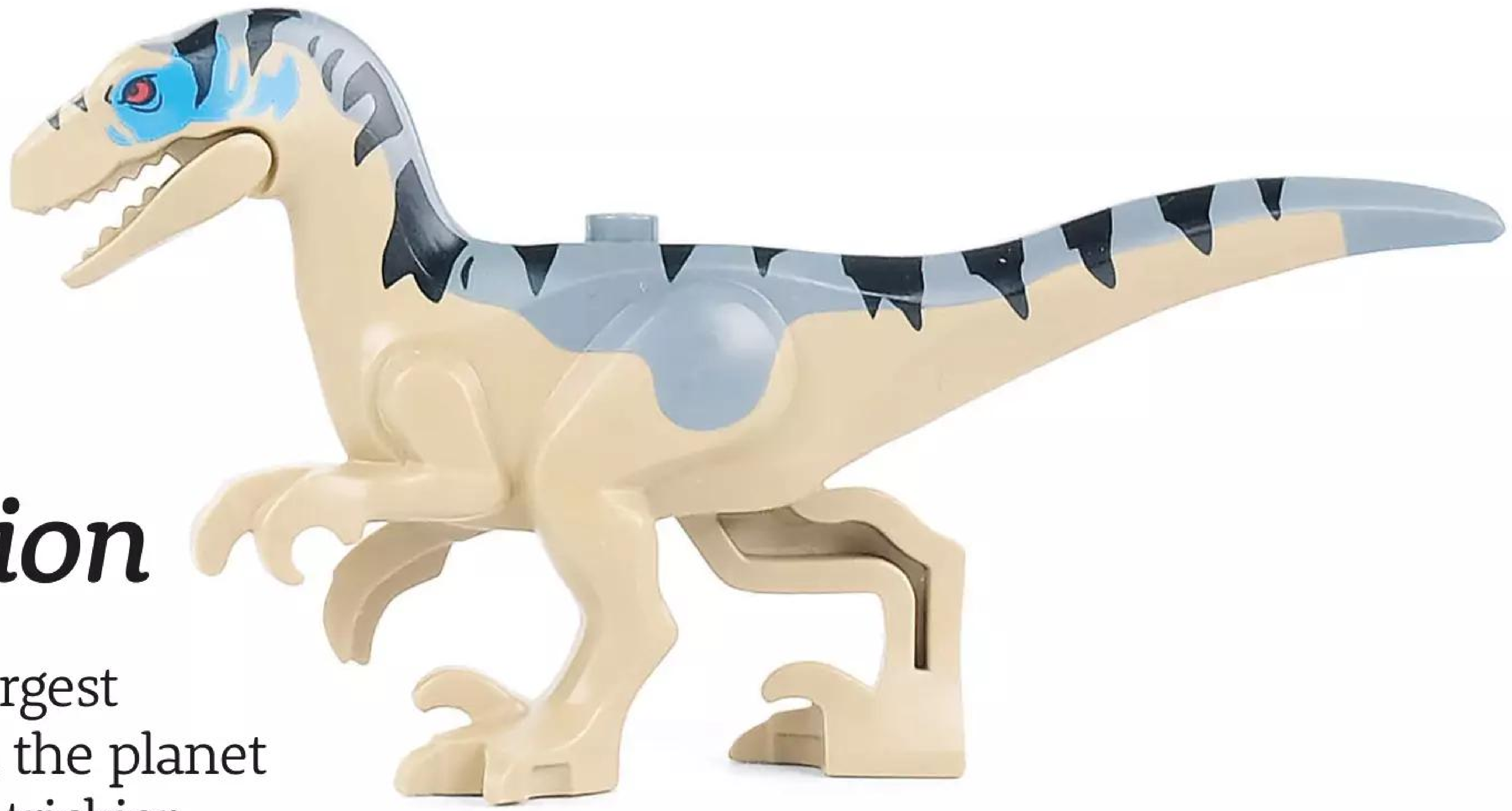
Verdict
52
A few fun play features and a small road vehicle elevate a set that doesn't really offer much in the way of satisfying building.



Every Jurassic film includes a T. rex.

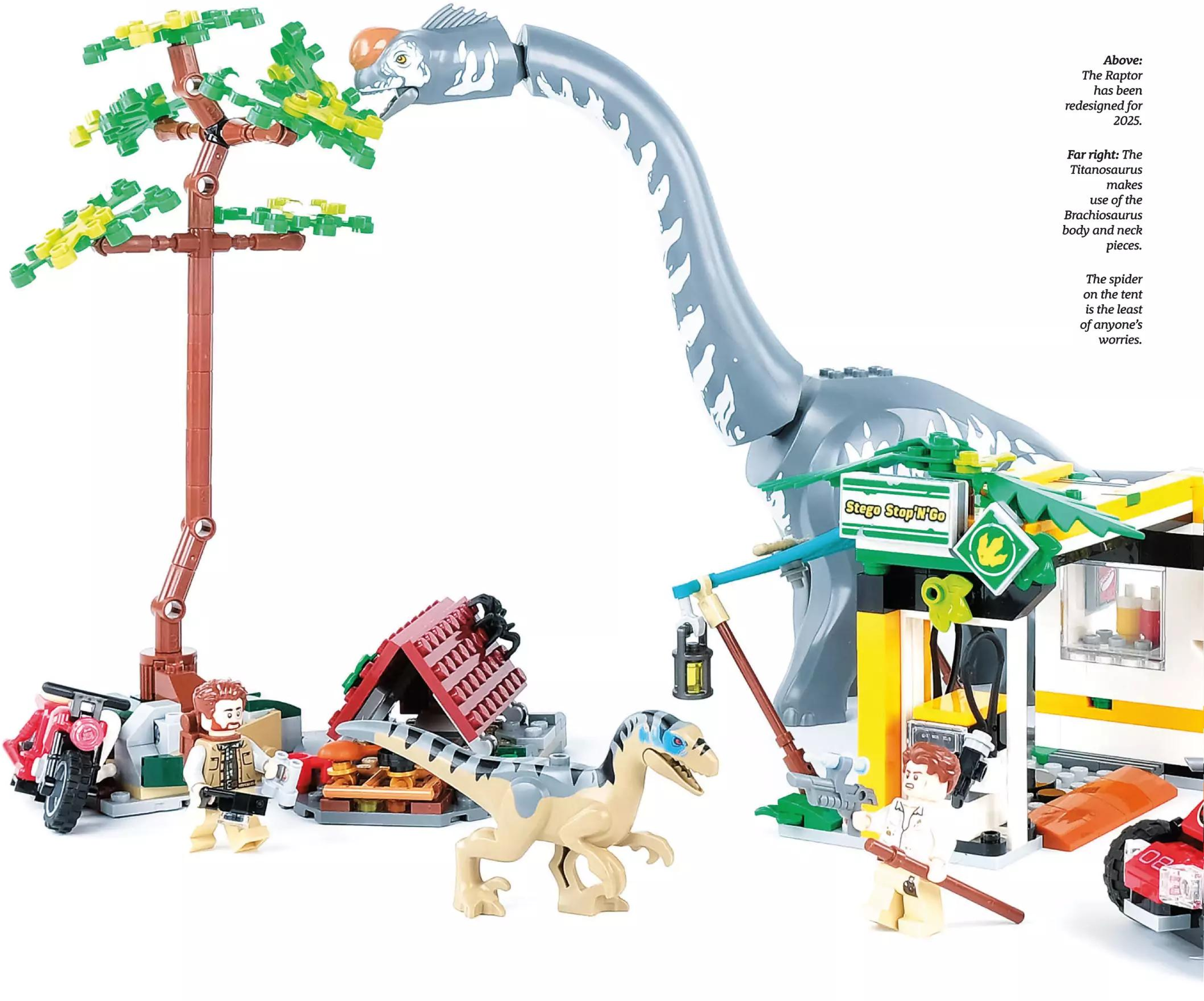
76973

Theme: *Jurassic World* / ***Price:*** *£89.99, $109.99, €99.99* / ***Recommended age:*** *7+* / ***Pieces:*** *582* / ***Minifigures:*** *3*



Raptor & Titanosaurus Tracking Mission

Getting a sample from the largest creature to have ever walked the planet sounds tough – but it's even trickier when a ferocious carnivore turns up



Above: *The Raptor has been redesigned for 2025.*

Far right: *The Titanosaurus makes use of the Brachiosaurus body and neck pieces.*

The spider on the tent is the least of anyone's worries.

One of the intriguing aspects of building LEGO sets for a movie that has not yet been released is that they provide hints at what is to come when you sit down in the cinema. No-one with anyone sense waits for home release when it's a Jurassic movie, so fortunately it isn't too large a gap between building the sets and seeing the feature.

According to press materials at the time this magazine went to print, the lead characters in Jurassic World Rebirth are heading to an island where Ingen left the most dangerous dinosaurs and a bunch of weird mutant ones too.

That makes it sound like the island is more Isla Sorna style research lab rather than Isla Nublar style theme park. Yet this set depicts a themed petrol station. It features two gas pumps, a forecourt and a small shop where you can grab a slushy and a hotdog. It is called Stego Stop 'n' Go, which definitely sounds like it belongs to a dinosaur themed visitor attraction rather than a research facility.

The theming suggests that the island the characters travel to was intended to be part of the Jurassic Park resort (perhaps they had Walt Disney in Orlando ambitions when it came to expansion) or they are going to stop at multiple islands in Gareth Edwards' movie.

Regardless of context, the concept is fun. What makes it all the more fun is that this filling station has been abandoned. The designers have liberally applied foliage pieces all over to show that nature is taking the building back, with slope elements also creating effective looking cracks in the wall. Black tiles give the impression of leaking fuel on the ground.

Signs of dilapidation continue inside, where the hotdog is so old it has turned green and the overgrowth continues. There are also small cracks on the windows, created with stickers, alongside some amusing signage.

In addition to that main building, there's a campfire to construct. The tent is very simple but provides enough space for one minifigure to sleep. You build a cooking fire and grill to go alongside it, which is an effective little construction.

The tree section connects to the campsite. It is a fairly bare and very spindly tree, but works fine thanks to the function in its base. Flicking a lever causes it to fall over, perhaps to do further damage to the petrol station or to impede a dinosaur attack on the heroes.

Then the third significant build is the off-road vehicle and trailer. Unlike the bulkier van in 76976 Spinosaurus & Quetzalcoatlus Air Mission and jeep in 76972 Raptor Off-Road Escape, this car feels lighter. It's more like a go kart and it's hard to imagine that in real life it would be able to pull any equipment behind it.

The trailer has everything the characters need to locate the prehistoric animals they need – a satellite dish, a case of syringes for extracting DNA and a tablet. The dish presumably links to the drone that hovers above the location, with a syringe ready to sample a taller dinosaur.

Understandably, it took the LEGO Group a while to get around to releasing a Brachiosaurus in the theme. The towering creature limits what else can be included with it in a set – but it is so iconic that it felt inevitable that the design team would offer it eventually (in 2023's 76960 Brachiosaurus Discovery).

To make the most of the body and neck moulds, the LEGO Group has reused them in new colours for the Titanosaurus. It's still a shame that the legs are not articulated, but the neck motion from the click joint is fantastic. The new head is very detailed, intricately moulded and printed for a really compelling addition to the dino collection. The tree is scaled to match the Titanosaurus so it can enjoy a snack.

In recent years, the LEGO Jurassic World theme has downsized the smallest dinosaurs, as the previous versions of the human-ish sized creatures were woefully out of scale. They were too big compared to minifigures and too big compared to larger dinosaurs, so needed shrinking a bit.

Finally, the Velociraptor has been redesigned and it looks spectacular for it. The creature's lithe proportions are delivered, it is in its deadly stance and somehow is all the more terrifying for being smaller. This take on the Raptor makes the previous iteration look almost comical.

What makes Jurassic movies so fun is the juxtaposition of a supposedly jolly theme park alongside rampaging prehistoric animals pursuing everyone. The overgrown Stego Stop 'n' Go is the perfect backdrop to a showdown between two creatures and the minifigures who have quite a good chance of ending up as dino fodder. This is one of the wave's most appealing models.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
68
This set is an all-rounder – both dinosaurs are excellent and the varied build is appealing. The petrol station is the highlight.

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76974

Theme: *Jurassic World / **Price:** £54.99, $59.99, €59.99 /*
Recommended age: *9+ / **Pieces:** 858 / **Minifigures:** 2*

Brick-Built Mosasaurus Boat Mission

If you're visiting a dinosaur infested island, the water is the safest place to be. Right?

There's an interesting challenge that the LEGO Group faces when bringing dinosaurs to the brick. As Jurassic World collectors will be all too aware, the moulded beasts that are included in most of the sets push the price up and the piece count down – the building set has less building in it because of the dino. Most want it that way though, because otherwise the dinos wouldn't match up with other LEGO animals like the horse and the cow.

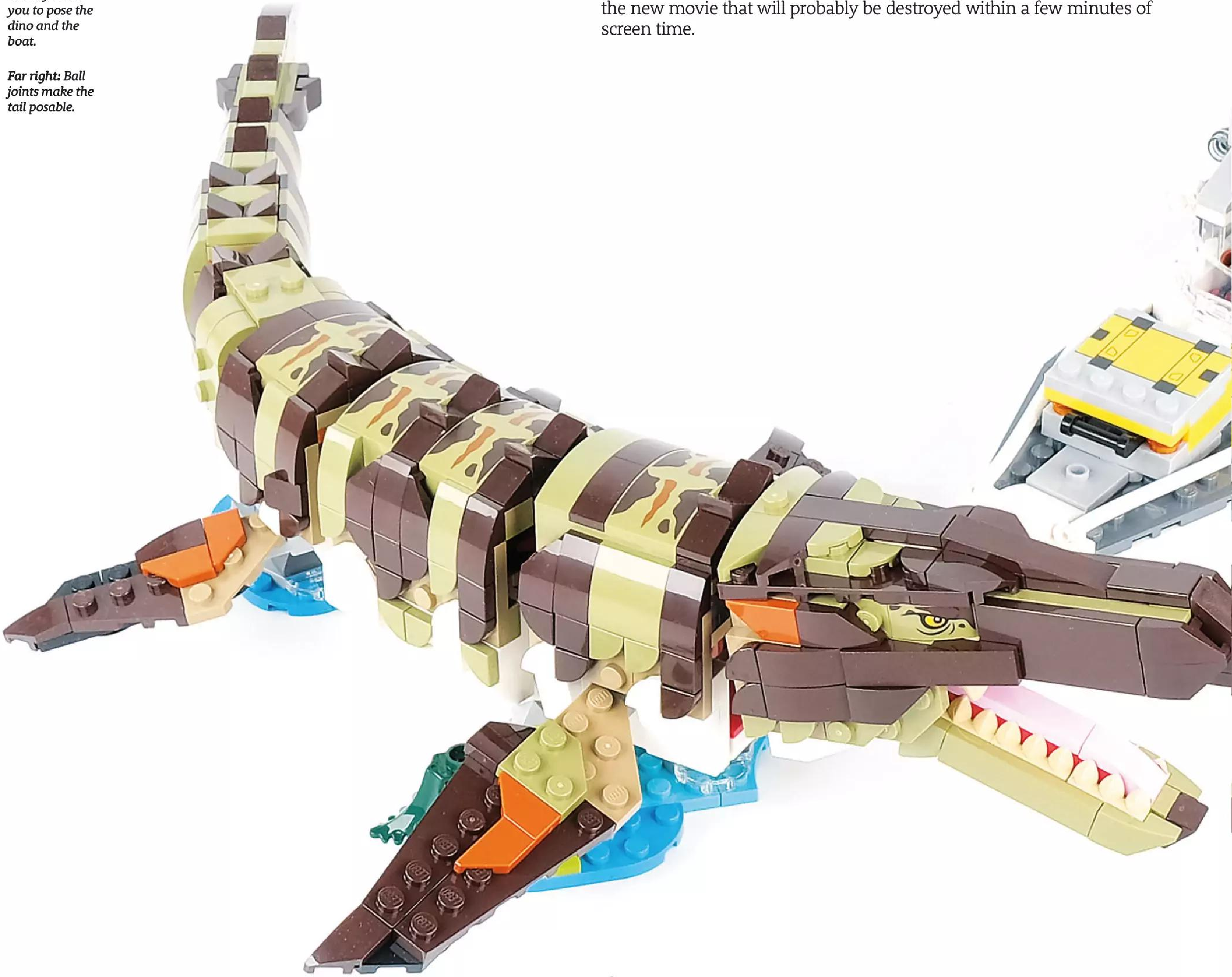
Some creatures would be prohibitively large as moulded elements though and the enormous Mosasaurus fits into that category. The sea creature was introduced in 2015's Jurassic World, memorably performing for a crowd by eating a shark whole. The trailer for Jurassic World Rebirth shows it returning for the newest film in the series, causing trouble for the human interlopers who dare to go out on the water aboard a boat.

Like other sets in the theme, this one has you building a case with space for minifigure scale syringes, suggesting that the Mosasaurus is one of the dinosaurs that the characters must extract DNA from in order to engineer a medical breakthrough.

Given that they are pursuing the biggest of dinosaurs, they are probably gonna need a more enclosed boat. What the set quite effectively does though is take the design from the film, capture the rough silhouette of it, and make it appropriately sized for a crew of two or three minifigures. Movie purists will be disappointed at the elongated front section and creative liberties taken with the helm, but this isn't the iconic Jeep or Ford Explorer from Jurassic Park – it's a vehicle from the new movie that will probably be destroyed within a few minutes of screen time.

Right: *Two pieces of ocean scenery allow you to pose the dino and the boat.*

Far right: *Ball joints make the tail posable.*



By scaling it this way, the designers are allowing children to play out a dramatic chase between the humans and the prehistoric sea dweller that is after them. It's still bigger than is ideal in some ways – it's nearly as big as the Mosasaurus and it should be tiny by comparison. Were the boat bigger though, the beast would be bigger and the piece count would be much, much bigger.

No-one wants the piece count (and corresponding price) of this set to be bigger. The Mosasaurus is not the dullest build, but it is not the most engaging either. For the main body and the tail, you build SNOT sections and then cover them with brown and green curved tiles. The colour scheme works well – it's more vibrant than the creature looks on screen, but it would not look like a LEGO dinosaur if the colour matching was accurate.

This perhaps illustrates something important about the Jurassic World theme. In the case of Star Wars, where the lore has been passed down through generations over almost 50 years, every detail is known by the fanbase – so accuracy is prized. In the case of Jurassic World, the only film that is truly revered is the 1993 original, so it is more acceptable to have a truly LEGO System-ised depiction of something rather than a screen accurate depiction.

When it comes to the Mosasaurus' head, the designers have found a lovely balance between the organic shaping of the film's computer-generated creation (with an organic shape that is impossible to precisely craft at this scale) with the look of the moulded dinosaurs in other sets. This is an excellent compromise, offering a balance between curves and sharper angles. The printed eye elements are also a good match for those elsewhere in the theme.

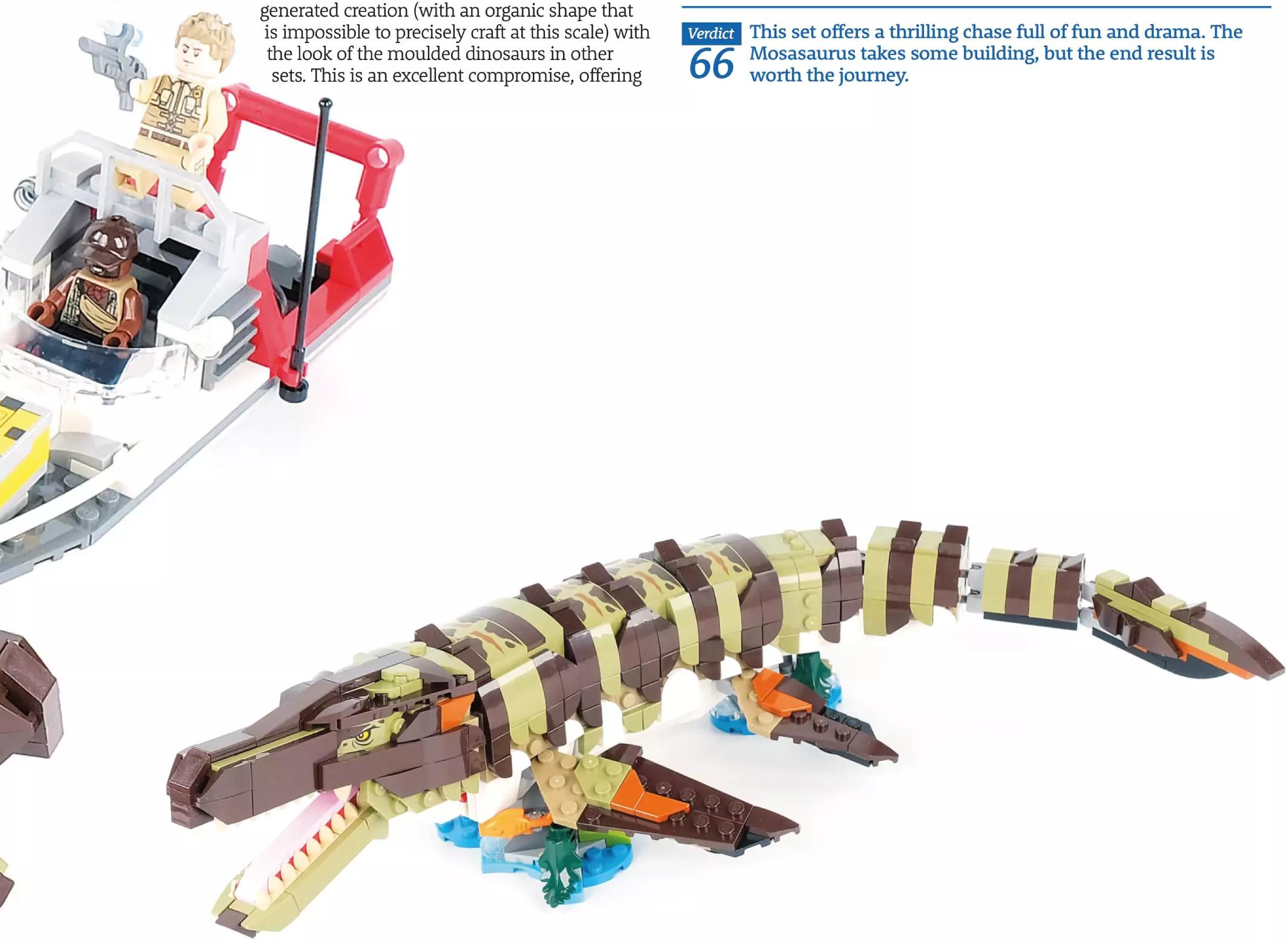
Each section of the dino connects using ball joints, which is a superb solution as it makes for quite the articulated monster. It can be posed to a degree and is great fun to mess with, depicting it swimming through the water underneath the boat and the unsuspecting minifigures who don't realise how much trouble they are in.

As was the case with the other Jurassic World films, the new characters do not have the distinctive looks that made the cast of the original Jurassic Park so memorable. The minifigures here, LeClerc and Atwater, are a good match for the movie characters, but it's hard to have a strong connection with them before seeing the feature, as they look like fairly generic action characters.

This is a unique set in the play scale part of LEGO Jurassic World as it has you brick building the dinosaur as well as the boat. The two models complement each other well in terms of building, but you will have to use your imagination for displaying them due to the mismatched scale. Still, it's much better to get this mighty dinosaur in a box this size than have a much larger monstrosity that requires a much longer shelf and a much more expansive layout.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
66
This set offers a thrilling chase full of fun and drama. The Mosasaurus takes some building, but the end result is worth the journey.

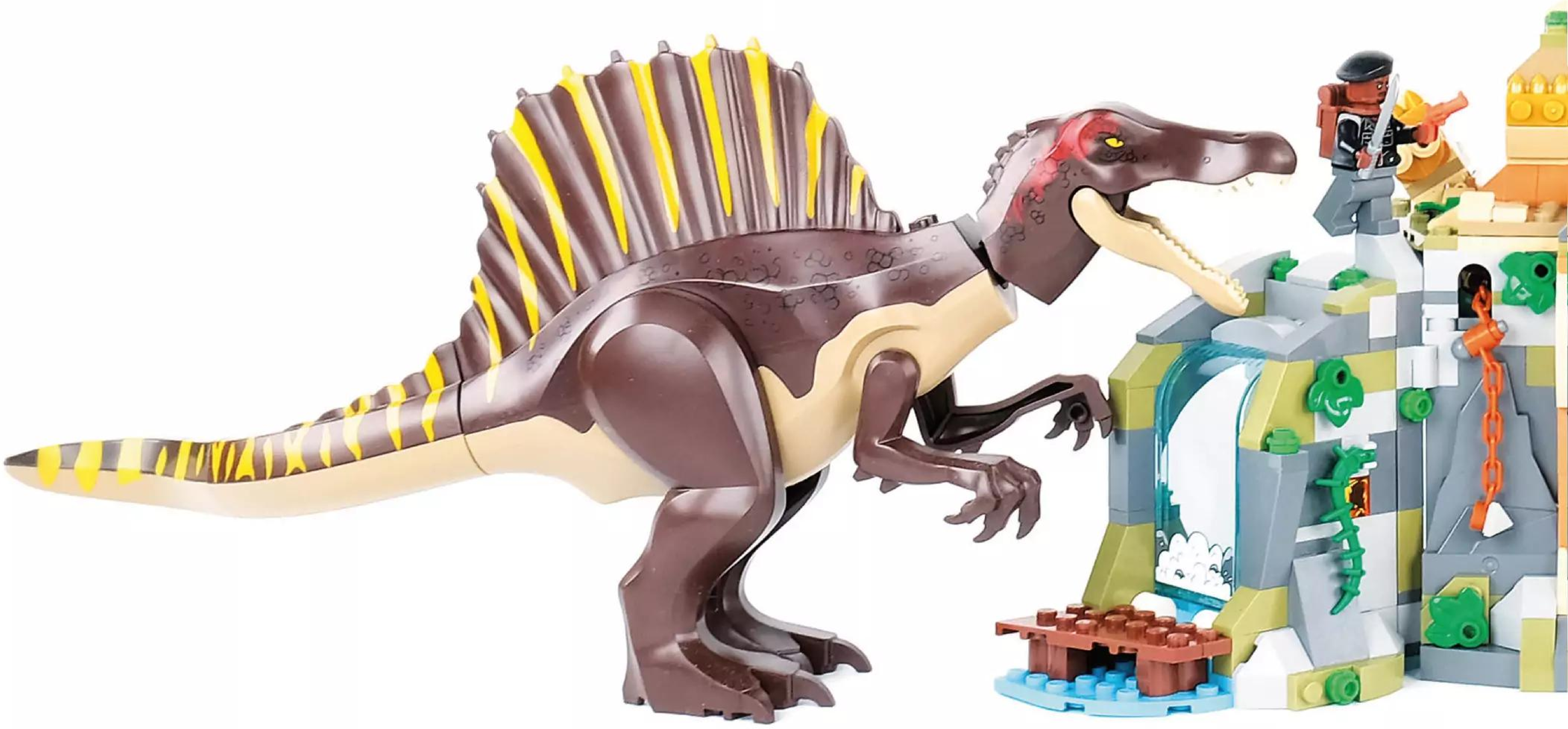


76976

Theme: *Jurassic World* / ***Price:*** *£139.99, $159.99, €149.99* /
Recommended age: *8+* / ***Pieces:*** *984* / ***Minifigures:*** *4*

Spinosaurus & Quetzalcoatlus Air Mission

In order to recover something rare and ancient, explorers must traverse an abandoned, booby-trapped temple – but this is still a Jurassic set



Richard Attenborough's performance in Jurassic Park imbued theme park creator John Hammond with a gentle persona that covered up what must have been an unhinged level of arrogance (the character's megalomania isn't sugar coated in the book). Not only had he populated an entire island with dinosaurs for the amusement of paying guests, but in The Lost World: Jurassic Park it turned out he had an entire second island also full of dinosaurs.

In Jurassic World: Rebirth, the latest entry in the ever-expanding franchise, it turns out that there was yet another dino island, an undisclosed research facility for the original park. That is why in the trailers for the new movie there is an action sequence that takes place in an abandoned temple, despite such a landmark not being apparent in the previous creature features.

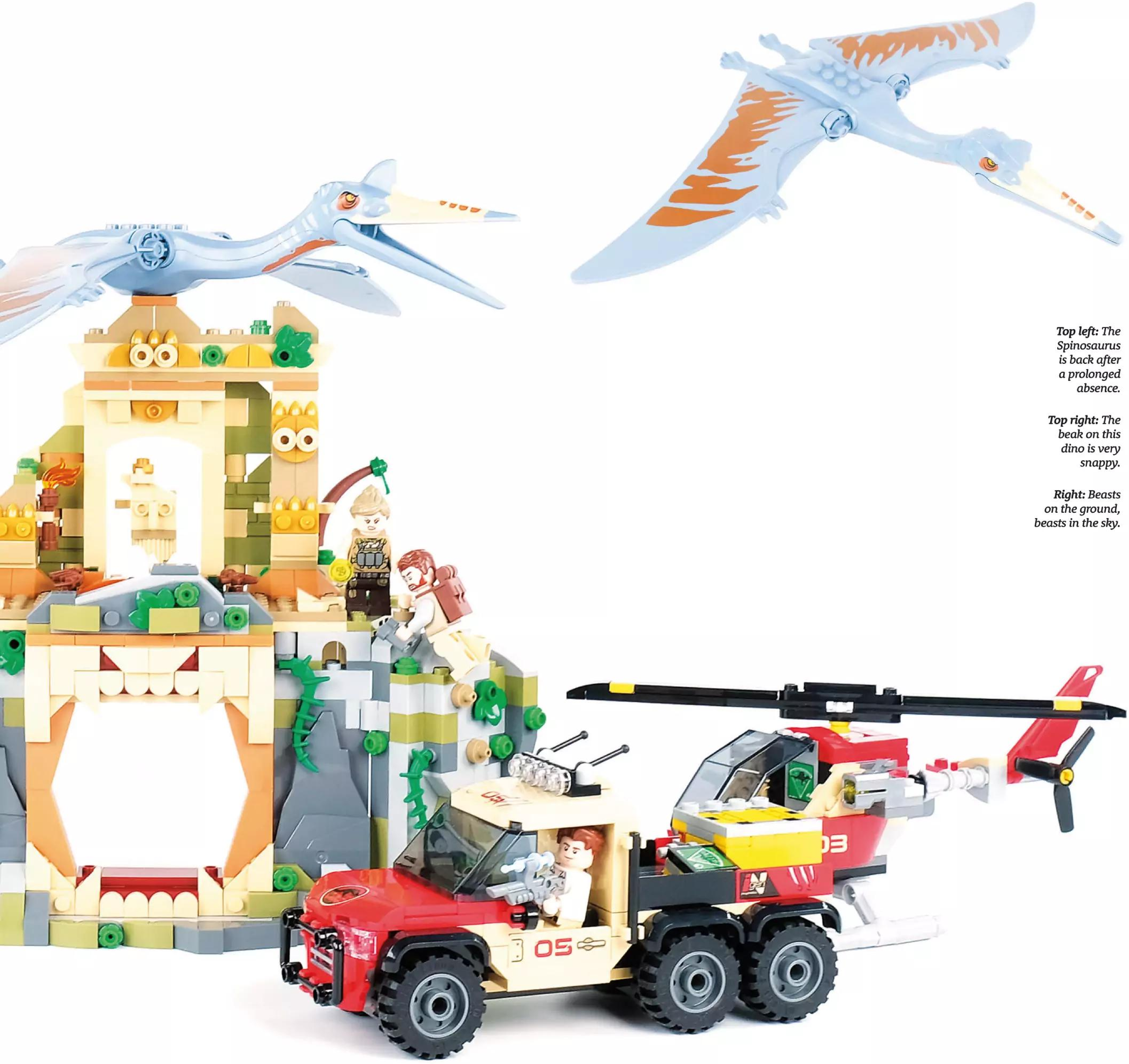
In that sense, 76976 Spinosaurus & Quetzalcoatlus Air Mission differs from a typical Jurassic World set – as is often the case, there are dinosaurs, vehicles and a bit of location. Here though, the cliff and temple model is the focal point of the set that everything else complements – it is reminiscent of Indiana Jones or Adventurers.

On screen, the entrance to the temple is located high up a vertical cliff, with a Quetzalcoatlus nest inside. For the LEGO set, that entrance is relocated to the bottom of the model, with the rock face on one side, a waterfall on the other and the interior on top. It's a very unusual way of presenting the scene, as there isn't any attempt to accurately convey the geography from the movie – but it is an effective way of converting the temple into a playset, as every aspect of the adventure can be played out and it's easy to access each area.

The build uses some nice rockwork techniques, with a mix of elements creating a natural appearance. You dot leaf elements around and vines attach to clips so that the environment seems overgrown. The colour scheme changes from greys to tans for the interior, to give the impression of an Inca temple. It's elegantly crafted so that it looks as if it is an ancient place that is crumbling.

In true Adventurers fashion, the temple is not without peril – there's a booby trap that falls from the roof as minifigures enter through the stone mouth and a collapsing column at the top. The former is particularly fun, cleverly combining a few Technic pieces and the chain element in quite a fresh, unique way that is subtly built into the model.

While the mountain would be appropriately sized in any other LEGO theme, here it gets tricky – the dinosaurs are massive when compared to a minifigure, vehicles have to be big enough to seat a minifigure… when



Top left: The Spinosaurus is back after a prolonged absence.

Top right: The beak on this dino is very snappy.

Right: Beasts on the ground, beasts in the sky.

compared to those items, the location does feel a bit small.

When LEGO designers approach a large set like this, the goal is to have a complete package for a child in a single box. But if these vehicles weren't included, could the temple be more imposing? Could it get that little bit closer to the scale of the movie? The question is especially relevant when the car isn't all that different from those found in the other sets that have launched alongside this one.

The price seems about right though. Jurassic has been notoriously expensive because of the large, moulded dinosaurs that gobble up the piece count as quickly as they do intruders on their islands. Here, you don't feel shortchanged in the build, but still get the beasts too.

It won't be a surprise that the Spinosaurus improves on the version from 2001's 1371 Spinosaurus Attack, but what's key is that it fits in with the current dinosaur aesthetic that has incrementally improved over the last few years. A menacing eye suits the creature well and the yellow streaks on the fin look really striking.

The Quetzalcoatlus is also fun, with a large, menacing beak and very decent wingspan. Again, the decoration is nice, matching the aesthetic on the creatures across the theme. What's especially pleasing is that there's a spot to place the flying dino on top of the temple – in the past, thought hasn't always been given to how these winged reptiles will interact with the model.

Without having seen Jurassic World Rebirth, it's impossible to know if the new characters will have more impact than Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard's generic types from the recent trio of films. It's great to get them all – Martin Krebs, Zora Bennett, Duncan Kincaid and Dr. Henry Loomis – in a single box though.

This is a set that is hard to define; it is by far the most interesting of the sets inspired by the new movie, as it is so different. The size of the core temple model is very satisfying for a playset, but then it does feel a bit small when surrounded by dinosaurs and vehicles. Ultimately, the novelty of getting this sort of model within Jurassic World makes up for the sizing challenge, but it is a shame that the vehicles weren't jettisoned in favour of a bigger location.

GRAHAM E. HANCOCK

Verdict
81
This set demonstrates that Jurassic World can still surprise as a theme. The only really complaint is that the designers didn't take the unique concept even further.

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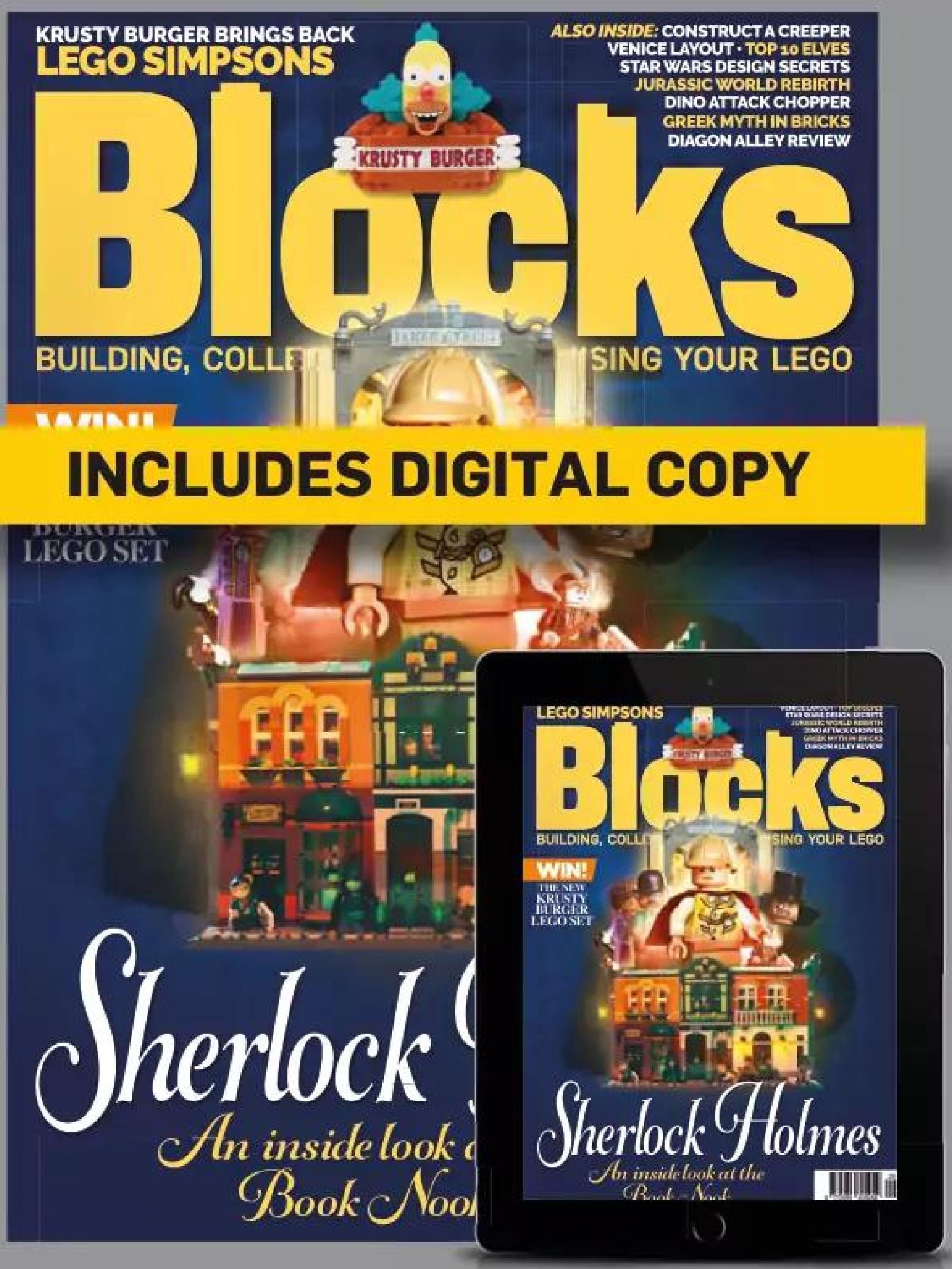

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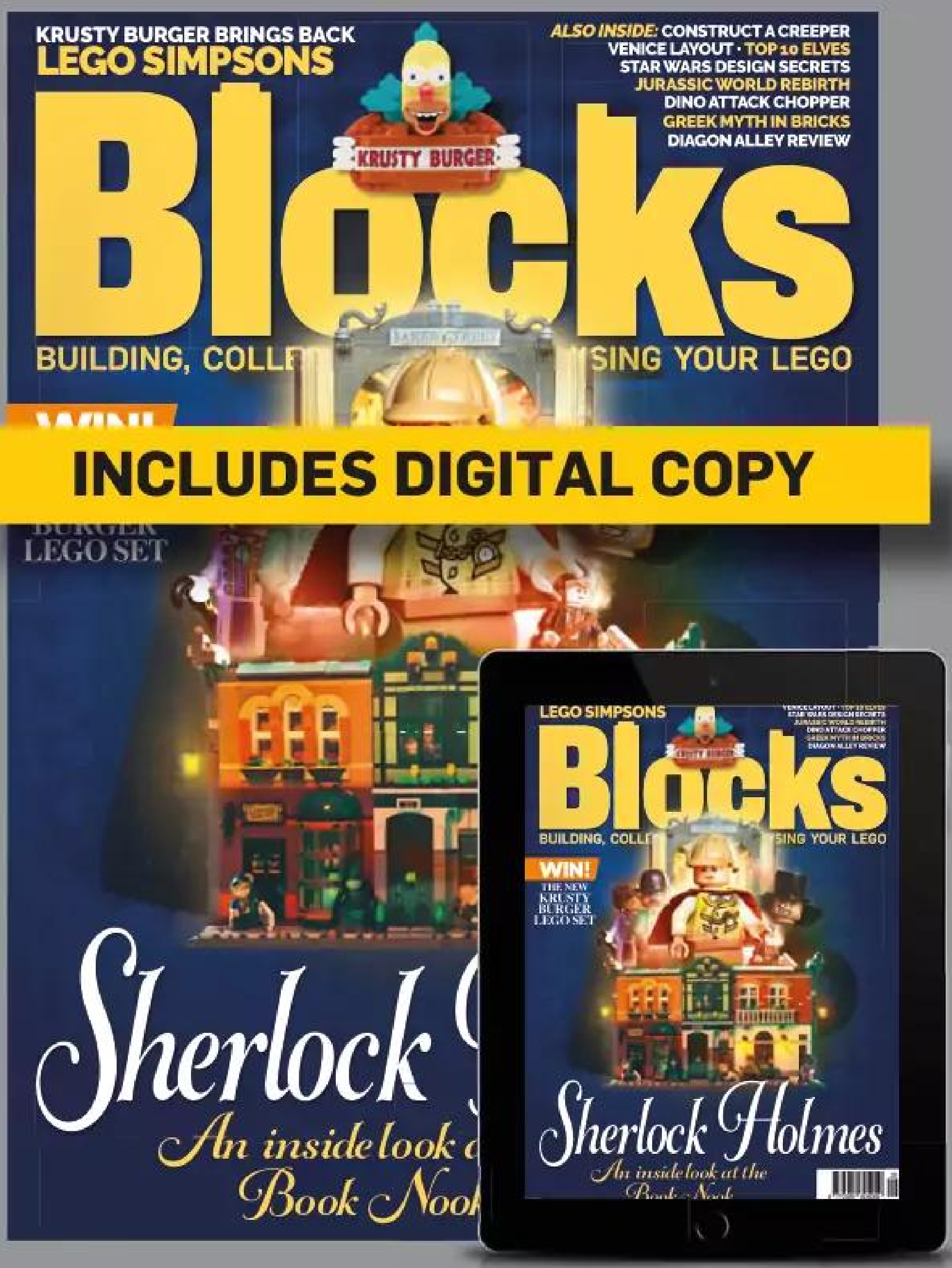

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76444

Theme: *Harry Potter* / ***Price:*** *£169.99, $199.99, €199.99* /
Recommended age: *18+* / ***Pieces:*** *2,750* / ***Minifigures:*** *0*

Diagon Alley Wizarding Shops

Can you truly find every magical familiar and spell supplies in the largest version of Diagon Alley yet?

GET THIS IF YOU LIKED

10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook

If you loved the street scenes and classic cobblestones in this charming book nook, then this is takes the concept much, much further. The smaller size means that 76444 can offer even more depth to the buildings, with micro figures standing in for minifigures to give a sense of scale.

10362 French Café

If you enjoy charming street scenes like 10362 French Café, then this Harry Potter set evokes similar feelings. The part usage in the Paris inspired set, such as the drill bits for cypress trees flanking the entrance, is impressive – and there's plenty more of that in Diagon Alley, such as the telescopes used as columns.

76452 Quality Quidditch Supplies & Ice Cream Parlour

The larger version of some of the stores in this set offers plenty of fun between flying and ice cream. You can only go so far when scaling for minifigures though and the beauty of 76444 Diagon Alley Wizarding Shops is that it captures the entire street, ensuring that no magical business is missed.

With wizards and witches bustling around to collect potion ingredients or buy spell books for an upcoming semester at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, there is a shop for every magical item imaginable along Diagon Alley. Hidden from the rest of the world by a secret passageway in the Leaky Cauldron, muggles completely pass it by and be unaware of its existence. Only those with magic know the secret ways to access this world of restaurants, shops, and the imposing façade of Gringotts Bank. The goal of 76444 Diagon Alley Wizarding Shops is to convey these zany colours and mismatched styles.

Diagon Alley is split up into five different sections to make the overall experience a series of bitesize builds. Each part begins with a series of baseplates connected via grey and dark tan tiles to recreate the cobblestone of the main thoroughfare, with a few lamps dotted around for interest. The actual buildings begin with the odd proportions of the Leaky Cauldron, a fitting place to start as it's a key way of entering Diagon Alley unless you have a pocketful of floo powder. It has an irregularly shaped exterior archway to capture the bricks separating to reveal the magical space and inside there's a dragon's egg nestled by a fireplace as a reference to Hagrid.

Madame Malkin's Robes for All Occasions is also notable, not only for the beautiful purple trimmed bay windows, but because it is where in Harry Potter initially meets Draco Malfoy in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. The scene was changed for the film, but there's almost a whole chapter of Harry being fitted for his Hogwarts robes while Draco behaves as his usual snobbish self. This also helps to

Left: *Don't ask where Borgin & Burke get their wares.*

Below: *Prepare to give up an entire shelf.*

explain Narcissa Malfoy's inclusion as a micro figure as she is the one who helped Draco prepare for his first year at school. Right next door is Quality Quidditch Supplies, where the Nimbus 2000 is on display. LEGO paintbrushes brilliantly double as brooms at this scale.

But what will become noticeable when building these shops is that the flow of the instructions sometimes feels off. Usually the building process seems very well thought out, with each step making sense. However, that's not always the case in 76444. A lot of the details in the stores, like signs or motifs, are added right at the very end. While this would make more sense in a minifigure scaled set, here it feels like adding things at the point when it's most difficult to do so. Placing the Golden Snitch in between the windows or adding the cat to The Magical Menagerie is tricky to do when the store front is finished, but would be easier earlier in the process.

Another thing that doesn't seem quite right is Gringotts Bank. This location has featured in several LEGO sets at differing scales and each one has always captured its gravity defying columns. Even 40289 Diagon Alley – a gift with purchase set that was also microscale – managed it. This design doesn't even attempt to make it lean slightly and its appearance is much too neat as a result. Gringotts is supposed to be wonky from top to bottom. It would have made more sense to exclude Borgin & Burkes and dedicate the pieces to make the bank look like it should.

Borgin & Burkes is the infamous black-market store on the adjacent Knockturn Alley. It was last seen in 2011 and while that was as part of a Diagon Alley set, the buildings were not connected like in this version. It also featured a dark black and green colour scheme that suited the ominous vibes of the shop far better than the understated olive green used in this model. While the designers have tried to represent almost all of the iconic locations in a single set, it would have made more sense to execute a smaller number accurately, rather than ambitiously adding extra shops that are not entirely necessary.

There is no denying that is an incredible feat to have the street in a single set though. 76444 Diagon Alley Wizarding Shops truly feels more like an experience than just a build. There are tiny details incorporated into every part of the design, whether it's galleons in Gringotts or different ice cream flavours for sale at Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour. While the stores have similarities, it never feels repetitive. Or at least the majority of it doesn't (stacking dozens of 1x1 plates as wand boxes to decorate Ollivander's does become tedious quite quickly).

The collection of micro figures includes some interesting choices. This set has a wonderful selection of store owners, but for some reason Lavender Brown then made the cut? Without looking it up, most fans would be hard pushed to even guess the figure is Lavender as she is

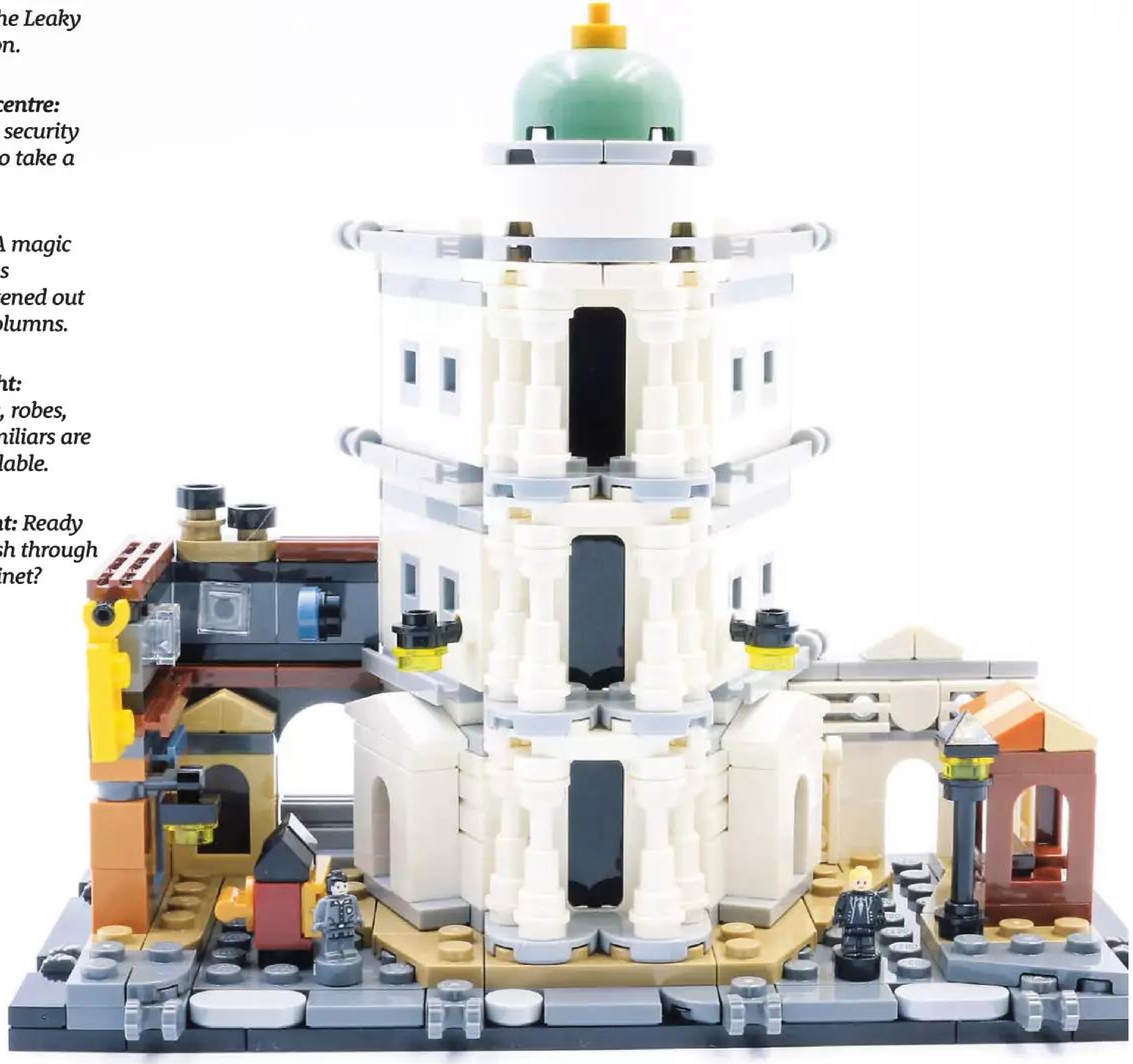
Above right: *Ernie's ready to drop wizards off at The Leaky Cauldron.*

Above centre: *Dragon security wants to take a break.*

Right: *A magic spell has straightened out these columns.*

Top right: *Brooms, robes, and familiars are all available.*

Far right: *Ready to vanish through the cabinet?*



not even wearing her signature pink. 71043 Hogwarts Castle perfectly balanced a selection of micro figures of professors and students that made the set come alive. In comparison, this version of Diagon Alley feels much emptier. Rather than side characters who are hard to recognise, it would have been nice just to have some unique witches and wizards doing their shopping.

That might seem like a minor set of complaints for such an impressive set, but 71043 Hogwarts Castle is almost perfect and is much more complex than a row of buildings. In many ways this set does live up to that standard, but there are definitely other microscale sets within this theme that have achieved certain aspects better. Considering the price tag, it's a shame that this model didn't learn more from its predecessors.

There is still a lot to appreciate about this version of Diagon Alley though and Wizarding World fans who don't have the space for a behemoth like 71043 Hogwarts Castle will find it far easier to display these colourful sections.

KAT REES-JAUKE

Verdict

78

A fantastically varied build experience lends itself to a detailed version of this key location, yet it doesn't quite depict the swarming street of the films.

76446

Theme: *Harry Potter / **Price:** £44.99, $49.99, €49.99 /*
Recommended age: *8+ / **Pieces:** 499 / **Minifigures:** 4*

Knight Bus Adventure

KNIGHT BUS
KB

The Knight Bus is ready to help any stranded witch or wizard in the Wizarding World. Given it has been more than five years since the last LEGO iteration of this kooky vehicle (75957 The Knight Bus), it's high time a new version aides not only those in distress but also those who need a restock of medium lilac pieces.

The biggest departure this new set makes from its immediate predecessor is the removal of the hinged side of the bus that opens out. Looking at that positively, the bus now has increased capacity with beds across all three levels, which is especially useful given this version includes a Sleeping Witch minifigure and there's plenty of space to add other itinerant wizards.

However, this does come with a change to two of the internal pieces of decoration – the beds and the chandelier. Although these beds are thinner (and simpler), the rocking motion is still achieved using a turn plate. For the latter, however, there's a marked drop in quality compared to 75957, mostly because of the lack of transparent yellow pieces here and the rather simple shape.

Yet the removal of the doll house hinge does mean this Knight Bus is possibly the most accurate yet in terms of capturing the vehicle's silhouette – it's much sleeker – and the window panes are significantly smaller, which is again more accurate to the source material.

The stickers add detail to a somewhat repetitive build (each level of the bus has a moving bed), depicting hot water bottles, luggage racks and a few signs. It would be welcome if any of these interior details were brick built for some variety. What this vehicle really lacks, however, is steering – the bus is known for its frantic driving, and yet that's never really been acknowledged in any of the LEGO models.

The small environmental build of a park bench and lamppost allows you to recreate the moment when Harry first sees Sirius in Animagus form before almost being run over.

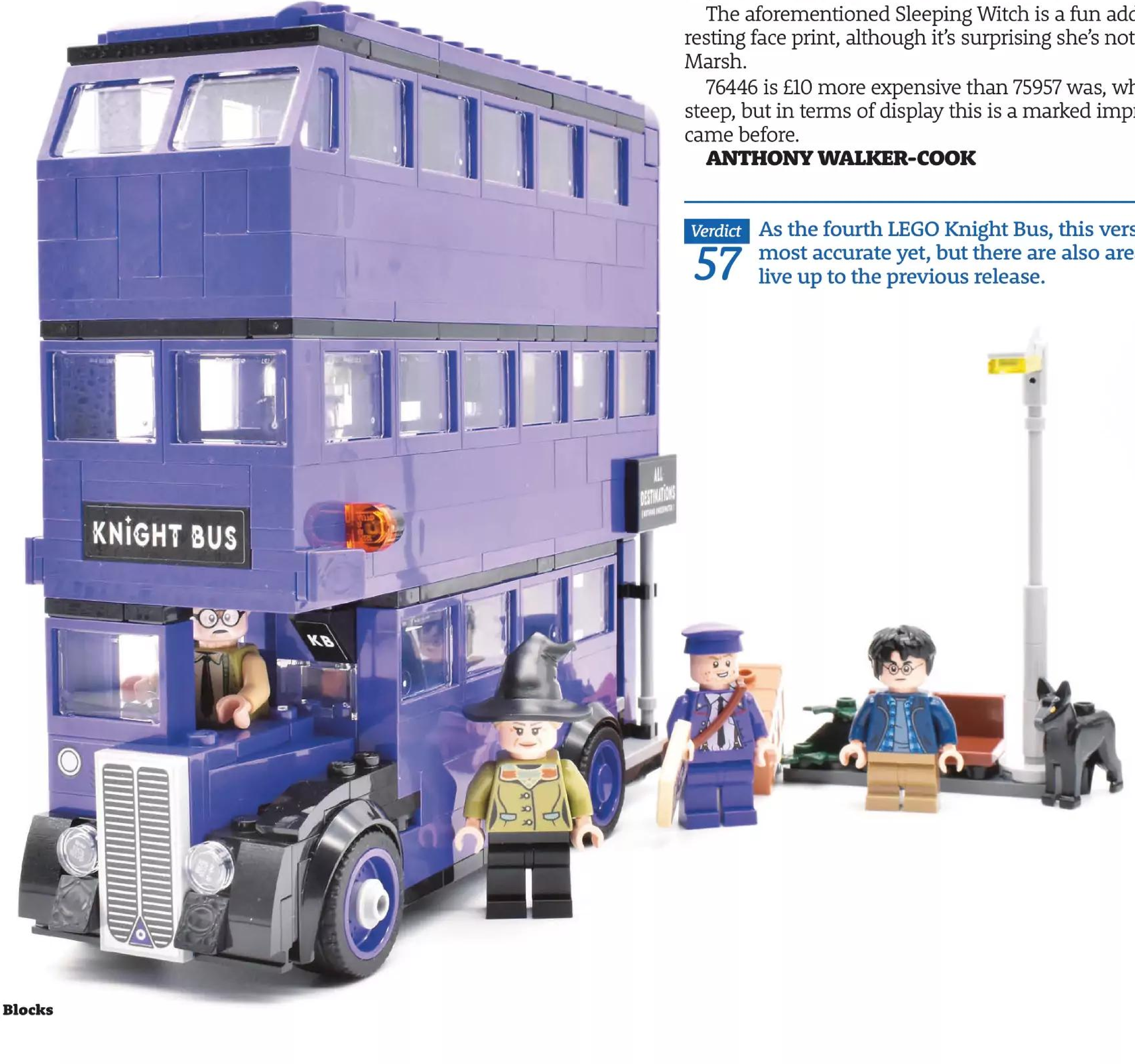
As for minifigures, it's the usual suspects in a Knight Bus model. Stan Shunpike has received a bit of a downgrade from his 2019 appearance, losing his dual-printed cap and detailed torso printing (but getting a few extra pimples on his face). Ernie Prang's cardigan is a little more frayed. It's a shame the shrunken head is now absent.

The aforementioned Sleeping Witch is a fun addition with a useful resting face print, although it's surprising she's not named as Madam Marsh.

76446 is £10 more expensive than 75957 was, which feels a little steep, but in terms of display this is a marked improvement on what came before.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict 57 **As the fourth LEGO Knight Bus, this version is generally the most accurate yet, but there are also areas where it doesn't live up to the previous release.**



***Above:** This is the fourth LEGO Knight Bus.*

***Left:** The Knight Bus has three levels.*

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42655

Theme: Friends / **Price:** £69.99, $79.99, €79.99 /
Recommended age: 8+ / **Pieces:** 896 / **Mini-dolls:** 4

Restaurant and Cooking School

Is this brick school for foodies a perfectly cooked treat?

LEGO Friends is no stranger to a restaurant; indeed, barely a year goes by without there being some form of food-related building. 42655 Restaurant and Cooking School marks a change from this, drawing on some of the most successful LEGO Friends sets by tying education to a specific subject (as 41711 Emma's Art School or 41714 Andrea's Theatre School both did with great success).

From the outside, this is a typical mid-size Friends set. There's a chef's hat sign, neatly created with various tiles, some fun architectural details and inside there is plenty to play with.

The building's frontage is certainly attractive, with lots of large black framed windows and awnings, however it's a hodge podge of colours, using tan, cool yellow, bright light blue and nougat. Tan croissants add some appropriate detail to the building's façade, perhaps alluding to the same piece's usage (albeit in white) for a similar purpose in 10243 Parisian Restaurant.

There is an al fresco dining area with two tables decorated with candles, plus a plinth for Churro the cat to sit on and judge those passing by. Churro sports a new miniature chef's hat and looks particularly adorable. A menu hints at some delectable treats inside.

Keeping the food theme going, golden carrots are used as spindles in the balustrade and there's further nice part usage in the ball of yarn being repurposed in yellow to represent spaghetti, which, if the front stickers are anything to go by, is this restaurant's specialty. A spoon and fork are aptly used as doorhandles for the building's entrance.

Compared to the other Friends schools sets, this one lacks some of the brick-built details to truly tie form to concept. Inside the building there's a reception, a lavatory, a kitchen and a hand-washing station. Four large stickers placed in the recesses of wall panel pieces add context, but some of the detail could have been achieved with elements instead, for example the produce in the store cupboard.

Unusually, the inside of the building is a bit disappointing. The ground floor in particular feels rather bare, with an open counter (for the aspiring chefs to display their creations) and the washroom. It would be nice if there was a stronger nod to the culinary theme here.

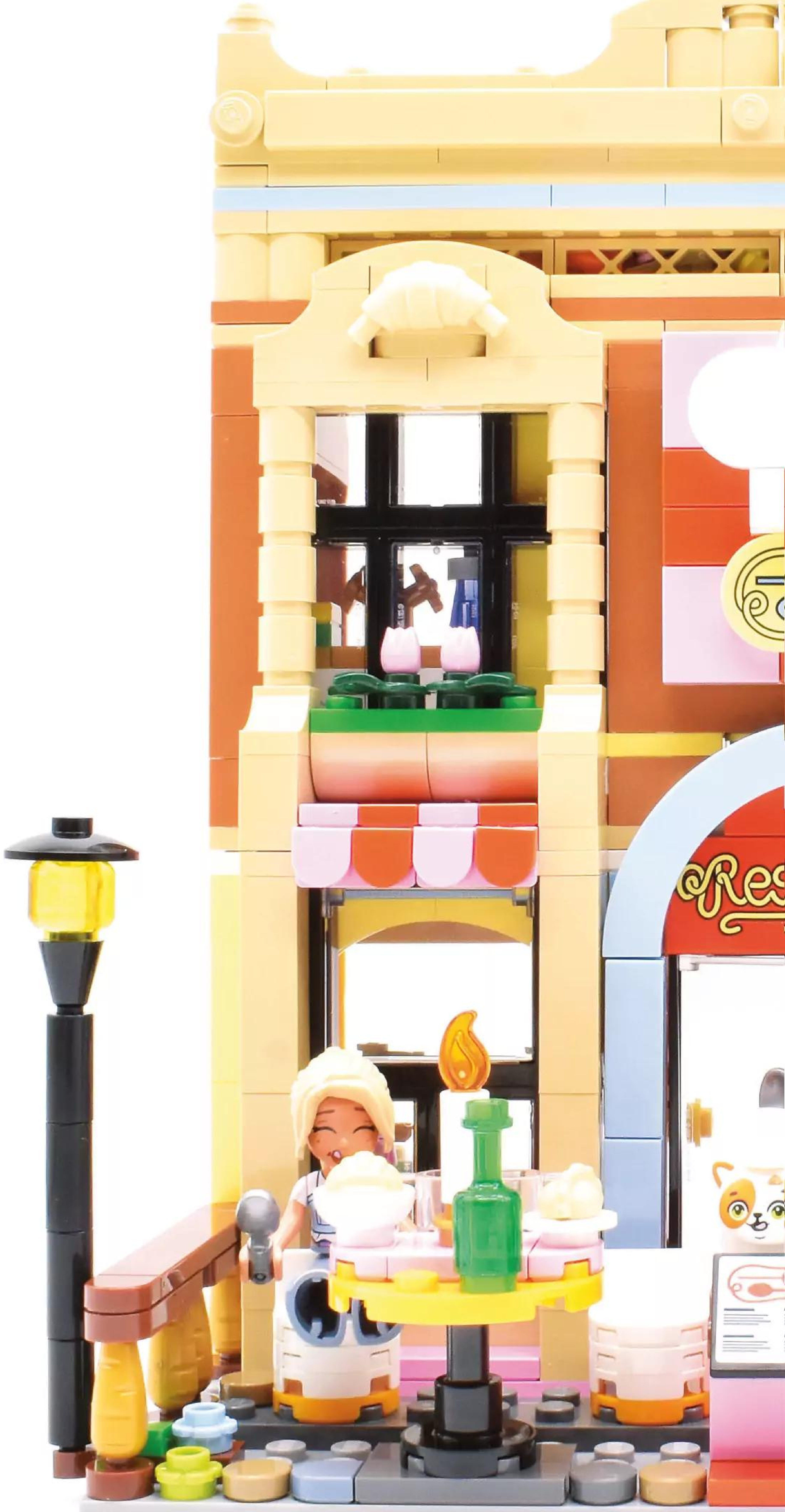
There is an open kitchen area upstairs, with an island set up for making pasta and an attractive black-and-white floor, but that seems to be where the cooking theme ends. 41711 set out various themes within art, including photography, textiles and pottery, but a similar diversity is lacking within 42655.

A baking station, for example, on the other side of the second-floor kitchen would offer the potential for a different facet of cooking to be explored through bricks. Another option would be a station or two dedicated to different world foods (Friends usually embeds a focus on diversity and acceptance in the models), especially on the second floor where the handwashing station feels like wasted space.

One of the model's quirks is the roof, which is filled with food-related pieces. Builders can lift open a long panel to reveal a swathe of food paraphernalia, including tiles printed with different fruits, plus hot dogs, fish and croissants alongside other tiles and plates that will allow characters to formally present their plates at the ground-floor serving station. It's certainly a novel idea that uses otherwise dead space, but it does inflate the model's piece count.

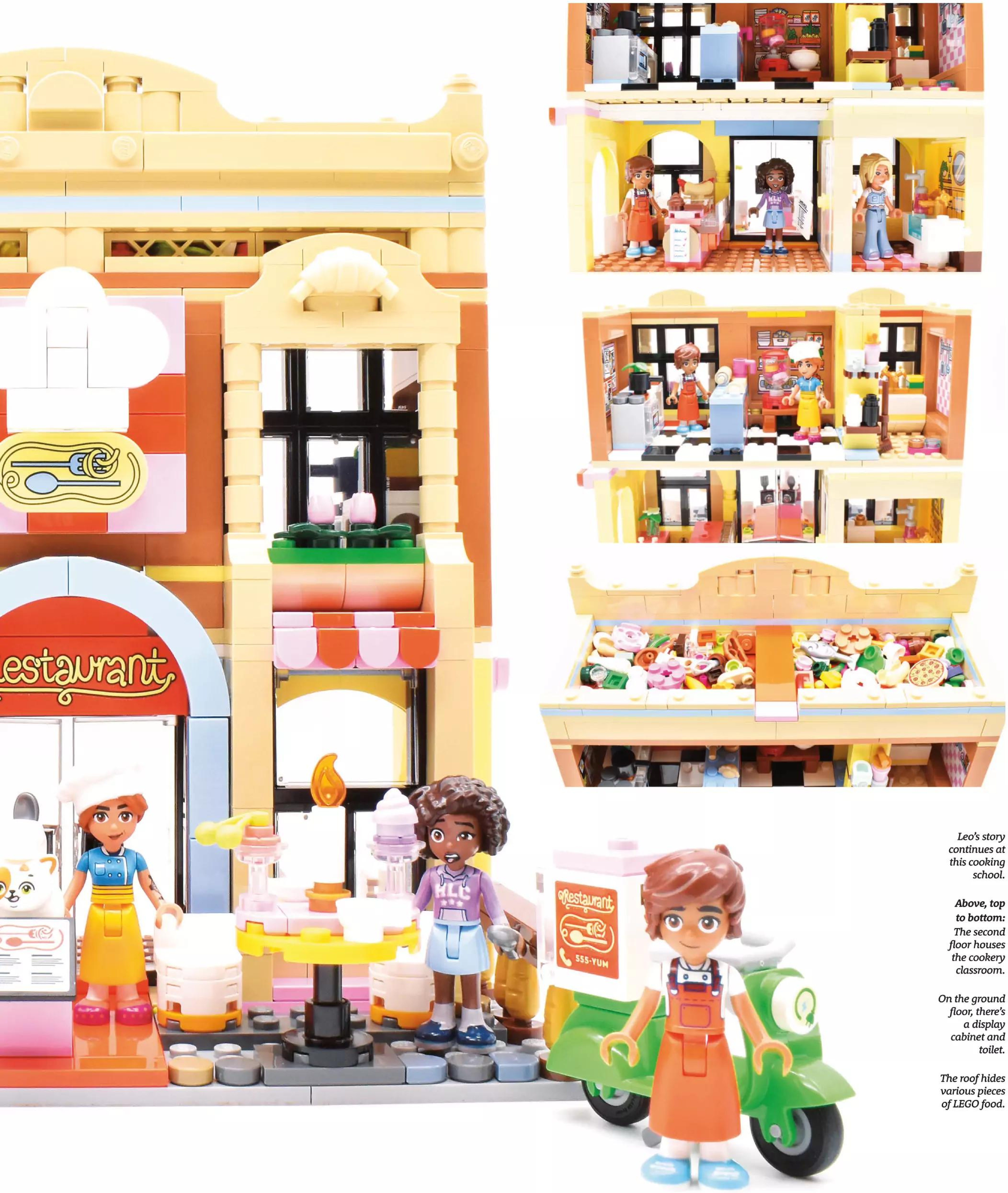
The opportunity for builders to experiment and create new meals is enabled through the mini-dolls, with Sara and Aliya both coming with alternative head pieces that suggest they are or are not enjoying what has been put before them.

Leo's love of food has been clear since the character's introduction in 41754 Leo's Room and then again in 41747 Heartlake City Community Kitchen, which revealed he inherited his skill in the kitchen from his Abuelita. Leo is therefore this school's prime student – although another would have been welcome – and so wears an apron.



Marta is a new character and the teacher at the school, who has two tattoos on her left arm (one a heart and the other a fish).

Unfortunately, 42655 feels a little undercooked, a fact made all the



Leo's story continues at this cooking school.

Above, top to bottom: *The second floor houses the cookery classroom.*

On the ground floor, there's a display cabinet and toilet.

The roof hides various pieces of LEGO food.

harder given its gourmet price tag of £69.99. Especially compared to 41711, which was cheaper and smaller but fully looked the part with plenty of play inside, 42655 has not quite managed to maintain the quality of the themed Friends schools – it doesn't leave a bad taste, but it certainly needs a little more time for proving.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

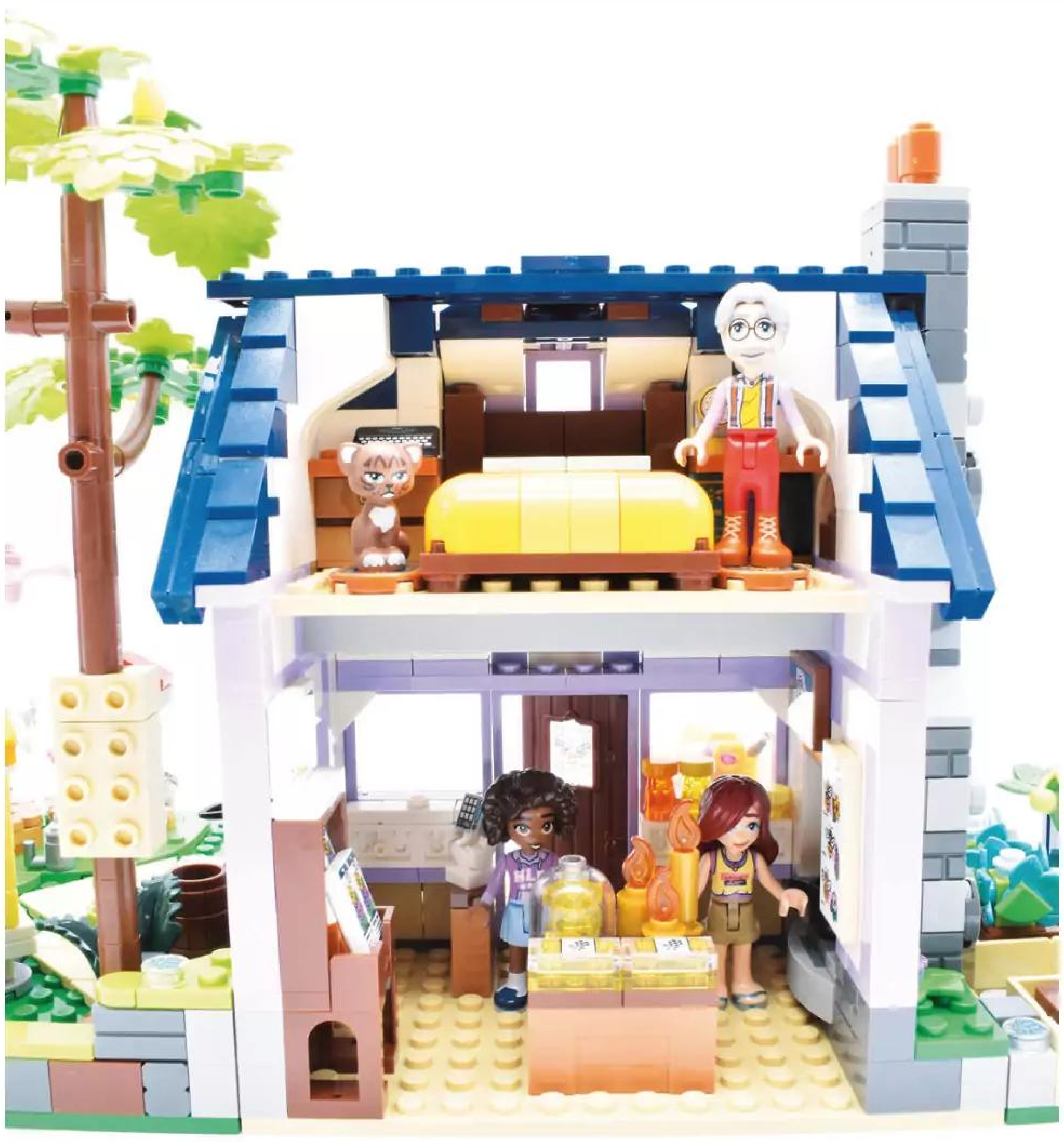
Verdict
62
With a high price tag and mixed interior, this cookery school unfortunately doesn't quite cut the mustard. It is packed with food related pieces though.

42669

Theme: *Friends* / ***Price:*** *£89.99, $89.99, €99.99* /
Recommended age: *12+* / ***Pieces:*** *1,161* / ***Mini-dolls:*** *4*

Beekeepers' House and Flower Garden

Does this Friends set have the right kind of buzz?



After a nod to apiculture (beekeeping to us general folk) in 2022's 41703 Friendship Tree House, 42669 Beekeepers' House and Flower Garden fully invests in this homely and important hobby with a charming display model.

The build is split across three sections – the vegetable patch, the house and the garden. Built in that order, there's a thoroughly enjoyable variety to the experience of piecing the set together, working on the natural landscape before moving onto the house's masonry and then back to the plants. Moving from vegetables to flowers and trees also provides further variation across the sections of brick-built plants.

Compared to other botanical-focused Friends models, like 41757 Botanical Garden, 42669's plant builds are relatively simple, but they are nonetheless highly effective. Orange studs give the impression of carrots just beginning to poke out of the ground; green quarter-circle tiles add further texture to the kale; and the new sunflowers have great height and stem variety through a combination of pieces.

Other delights outside the house include a well, a birdhouse and the hives, the last of which are made with cupboard pieces and SNOT techniques. The builds for both the planters and the retaining walls for the vegetables and flowers respectively are somewhat repetitive, but they truly look the part and add some welcome structure to the garden (the walls have an effective alternating pattern of square and circle tiles).

The garden path is also worth noting, made using various brick yellow tiles and plates to create surprisingly intricate patterns. The characters can sample the local wares in the sun on a large picnic bench – a pastoral dream for sure.

Various bee and ladybug tiles are dotted around the outside of the set. Previous LEGO prints of these insects tended toward a more cartoonish look, so it's a treat to get so many of these new designs in one go (there are at least six bee tiles in the set, with more to spare).

The cottage is an attractive combination of lavender and white with a navy roof. This colour contrast is effective, giving a sense of delicacy with some natural beauty. The dark roof is also set against the light boughs of the two trees next to the house, which add an impressive amount of height to the model; the tree on the right also holds up a delightful brick-build bird house that uses the boomerang piece to great effect.

A chimney skirts the side of the cottage – it's not as big as others in the LEGO catalogue, but it offers a number of lessons in building texture and colour contrast, which will prove useful for novice builders. Ditto the use of sideways building and lavender quarter circle tiles to add some visual intrigue to the house's frontage.

Inside the building, the ground floor depicts a shop that's well stocked with all manner of bee-related products, including honey, candles, seed packets and posters, whilst upstairs there's a cosy bedroom for Orla and Terence. In the centre of this top room there's a sizable bed that uses various tones of yellow for the duvet, but it feels a slightly missed opportunity to not have a line or two of black given the bee theme. The dormer window adds some needed space for play.

41703 also included a mini-doll styled Beekeeper outfit with a bee veil hairpiece. The cute printing on Olivia's torso in 41703 has been replaced here by Orla's more realistic design with various pockets. She has a kind, welcoming face underneath the veil.

Aliya, Paisley and Terence are the other mini-dolls in 42669. The core characters are perfectly serviceable, but it's Terence and Orla who steal the show here. Terence seems to be a most distinguished gentleman with an eclectic fashion sense (red chinos held up by braces and a lavender shirt over an orange t-shirt? Yes please).

On display, with the mini-dolls in situ, the entire model is certainly

This Friends set is devoted to the art of apiculture.

***Far left:** Inside the shop there's candles, honey and honeycomb for sale.*

***Below right:** Terence is growing carrots, tomatoes and kale.*

***Below left:** Orla is busying tending to the bees.*

colourful, but despite its width and height in places, it does feel ever so slightly small for the asking price – waiting for a small reduction might be advised, but there's plenty about this set that recommends it to all builders.

Bees have had a surprising presence throughout the LEGO portfolio over the years, whether it be through various Collectible Minifigures (Series 10's Bumblebee Girl, D.C.'s Bumblebee, Series 21's Beekeeper) or in Minecraft (21241 The Bee Cottage or 21165 The Bee Farm) – but trust Friends to embed much deeper messages within the model. This is a set about biodiversity, organic food and the centrality of bees to the environment as much as about play. There's plenty of buzz around this one.

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

Verdict 75 A lesson in how to offer a varied build experience, this model combines attention to detail with a strong message to create the full package.

90-100	*An exceptional set that does something special, original or innovative.*
80-90	*A top tier LEGO set that is close to perfect, showing what the System can do.*
70-80	*Strongly recommended, a very good LEGO set providing a really enjoyable build.*
60-70	*A decent set that will offer a satisfying experience, but may have a few flaws.*
50-60	*Still recommended by Blocks, but expect an average and pedestrian build.*
40-50	*Perhaps worth buying, but a set that falls below the usual high LEGO standards.*
25-40	*A disappointing set that might have some redeeming qualities.*
1-25	*A set that's only for the dedicated collectors; there are many better options.*

REVIEWED **THIS MONTH**

KNiGHT BUS
KB

SET	THEME	SCORE
10352 The Simpsons: Krusty Burger	Star Wars	76
10351 Sherlock Holmes: Book Nook	Icons	74
10367 The Lord of the Rings: Balrog Book Nook	Icons	65
10363 Leonardo Da Vinci's Flying Machine	Icons	65
76972 Raptor Off-Road Escape	Jurassic World	68
76975 T. rex River Escape	Jurassic World	52
76973 Raptor & Titanosaurus Tracking Mission	Jurassic World	68
76974 Brick-Built Mosasaurus Boat Mission	Jurassic World	66
76976 Spinosaurus & Quetzalcoatlus Air Mission	Jurassic World	81
76444 Diagon Alley Wizarding Shops	Harry Potter	78
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42655 Restaurant and Cooking School	Friends	62
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NEXT *MONTH*

What adjective best describes 76316 Fantastic Four vs. Galactus Construction Figure?

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Find out if Jurassic World 76970 Baby Dinosaur Dolores: Aquilops is a specimen worth tracking down.

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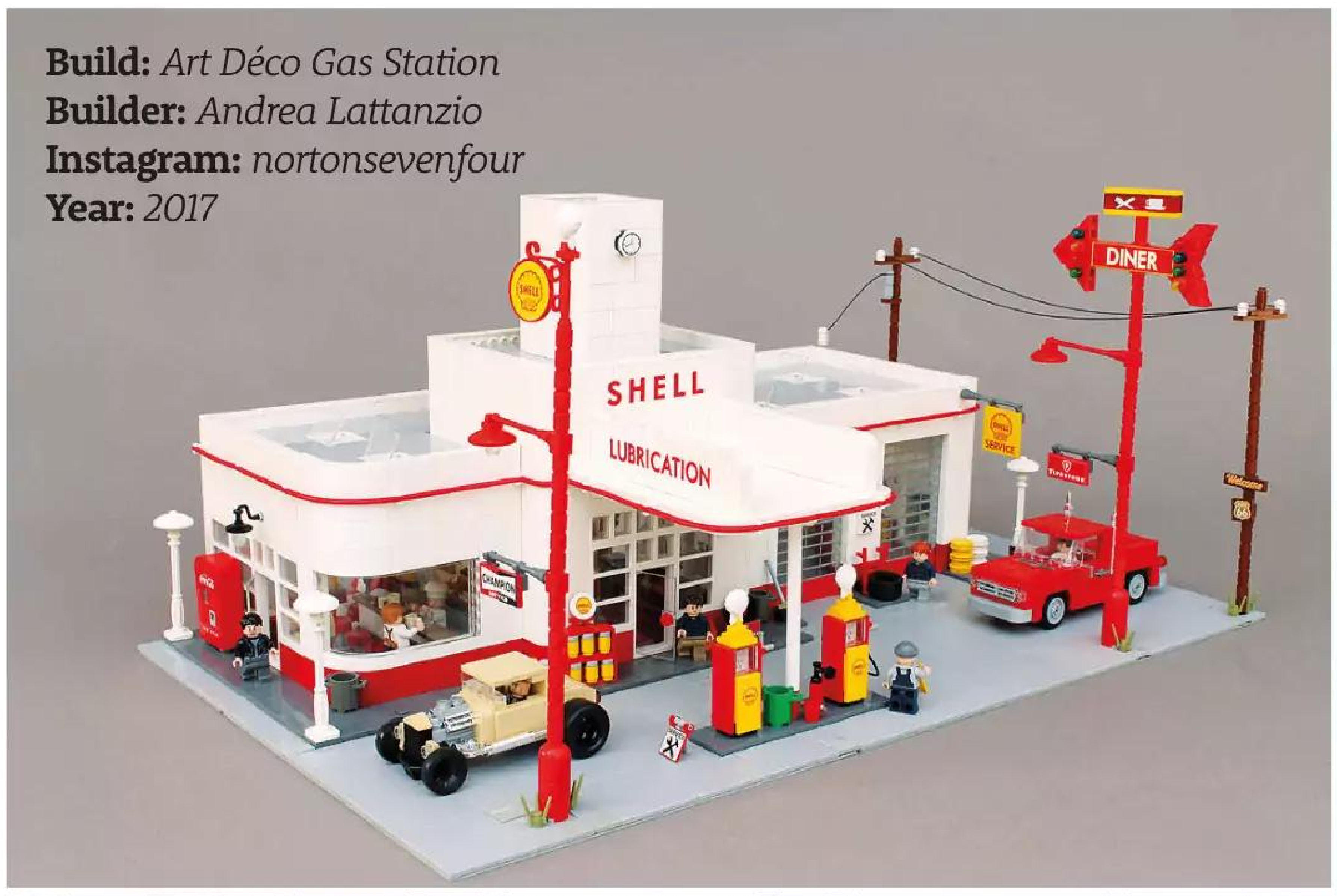
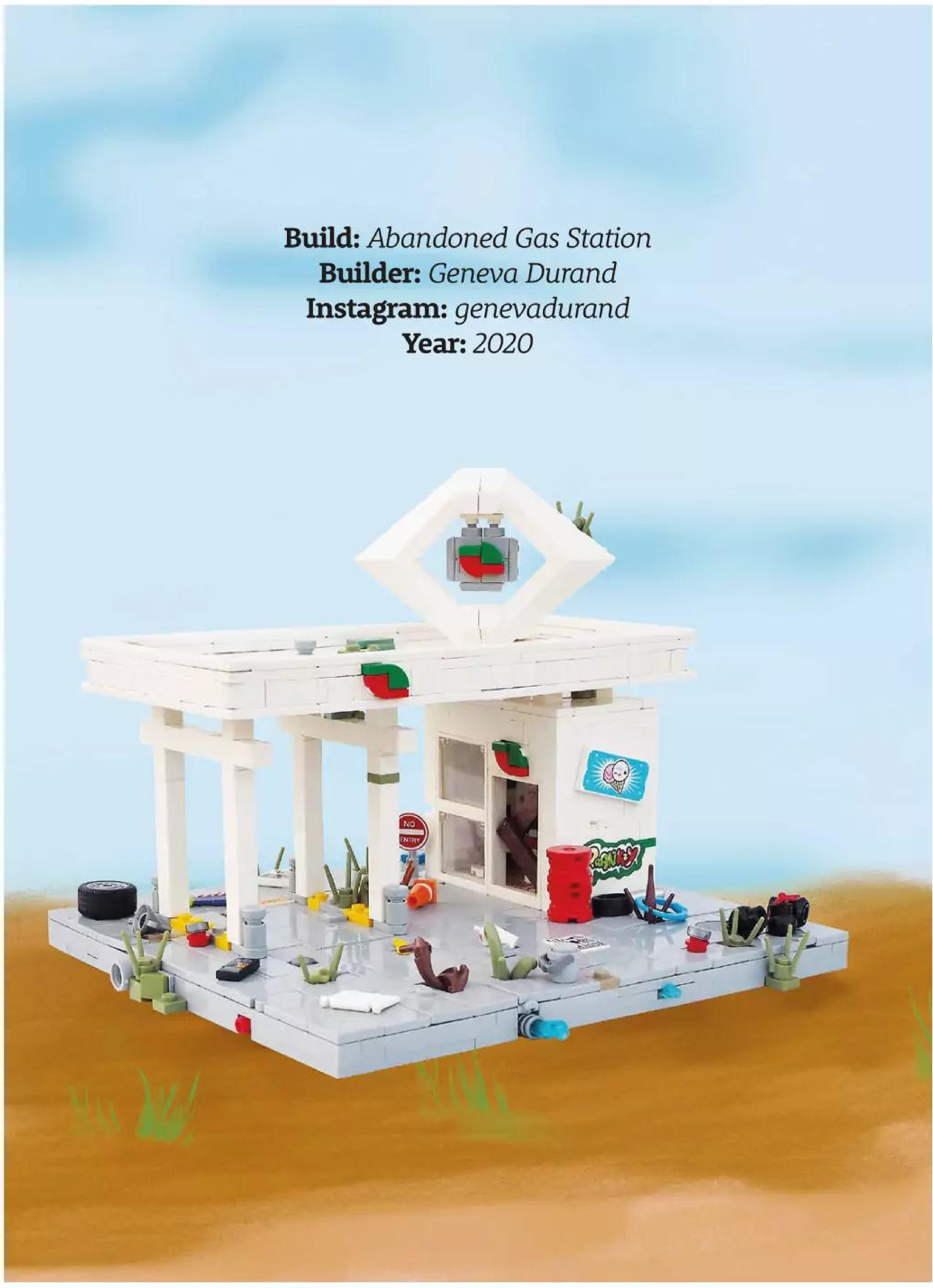
Petrol Stations

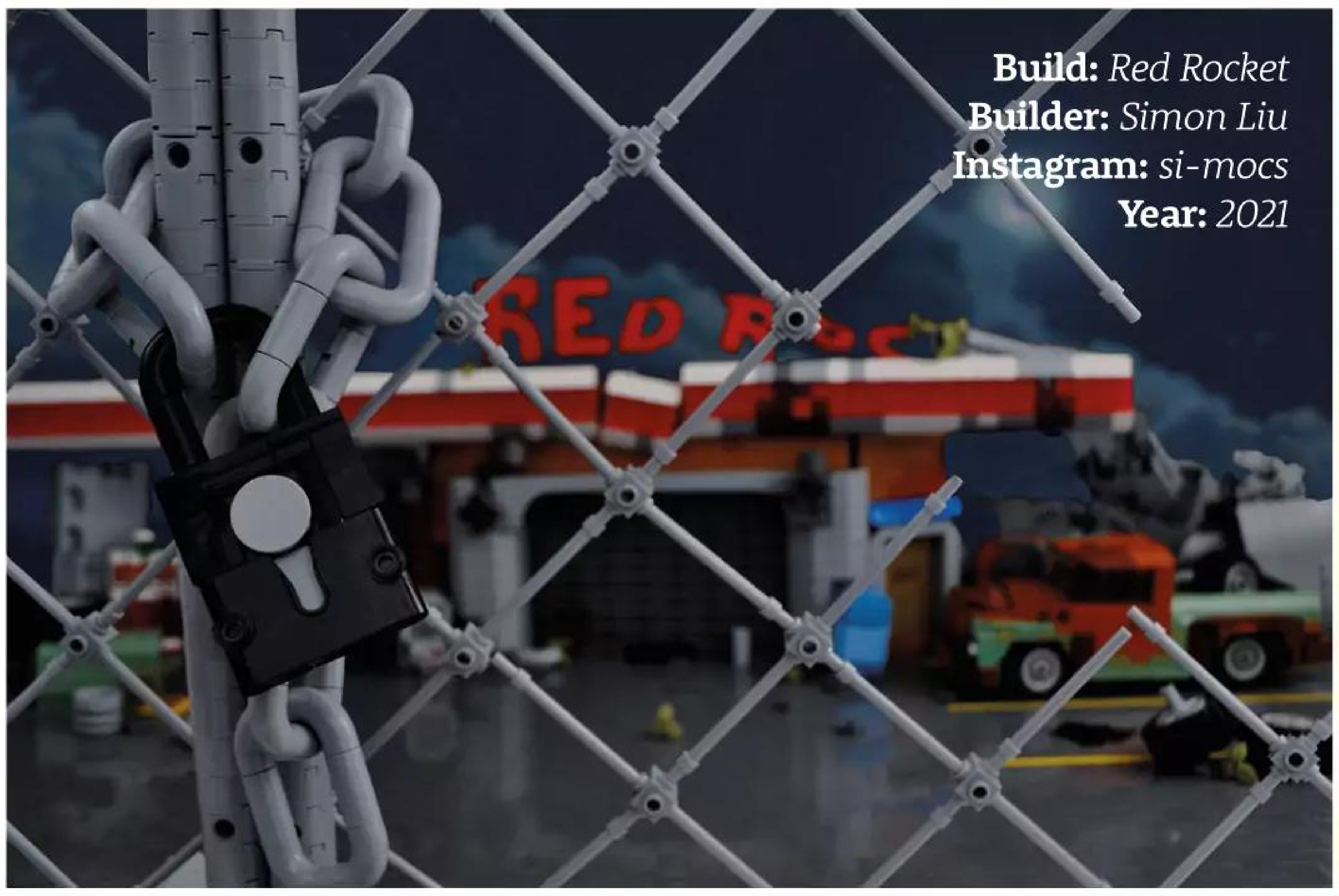


Build: *Art Déco Gas Station*
Builder: *Andrea Lattanzio*
Instagram: *nortonsevenfour*
Year: *2017*

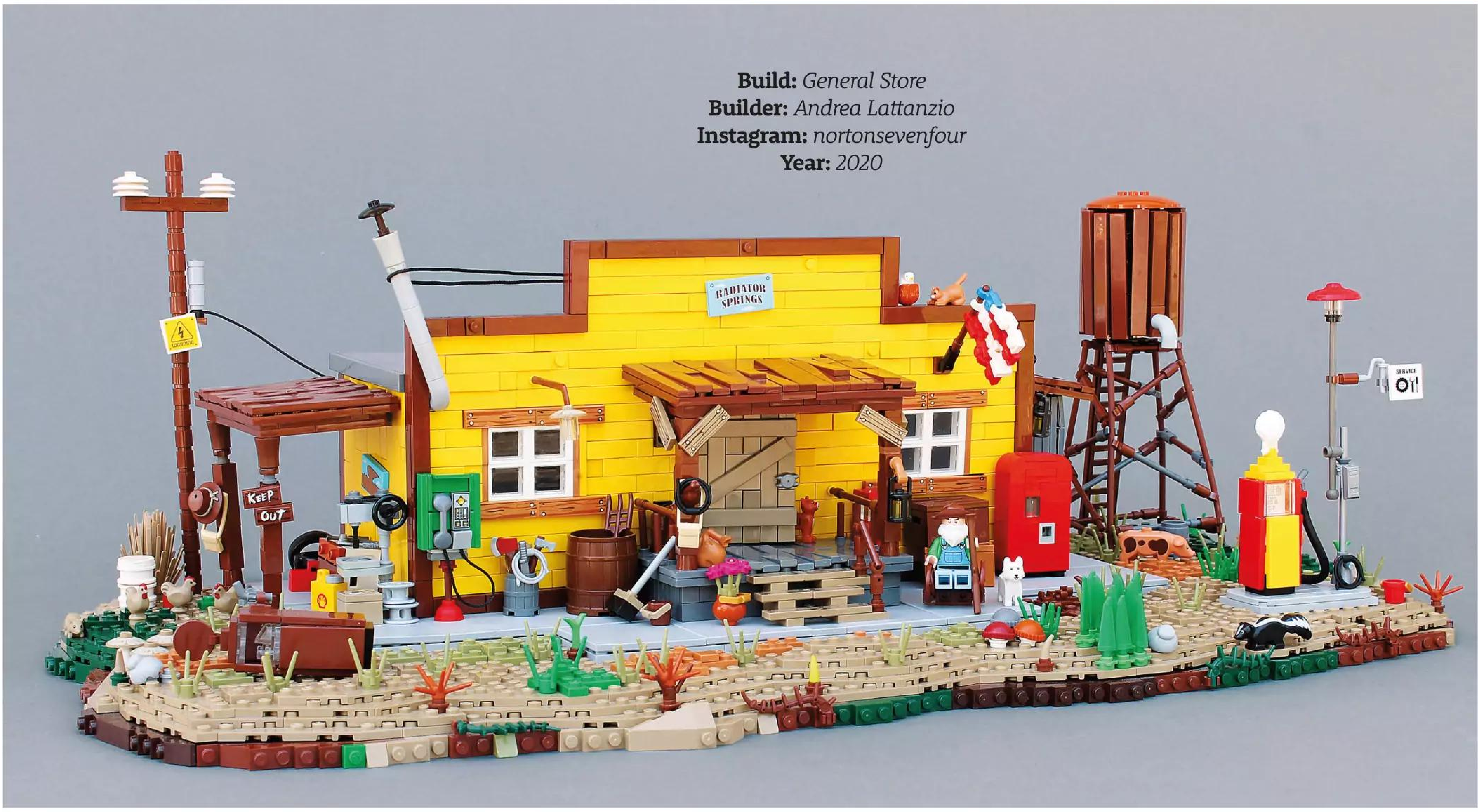
SHELL
LUBRICATION
DINER



Build: *Abandoned Gas Station*
Builder: *Geneva Durand*
Instagram: *genevadurand*
Year: *2020*



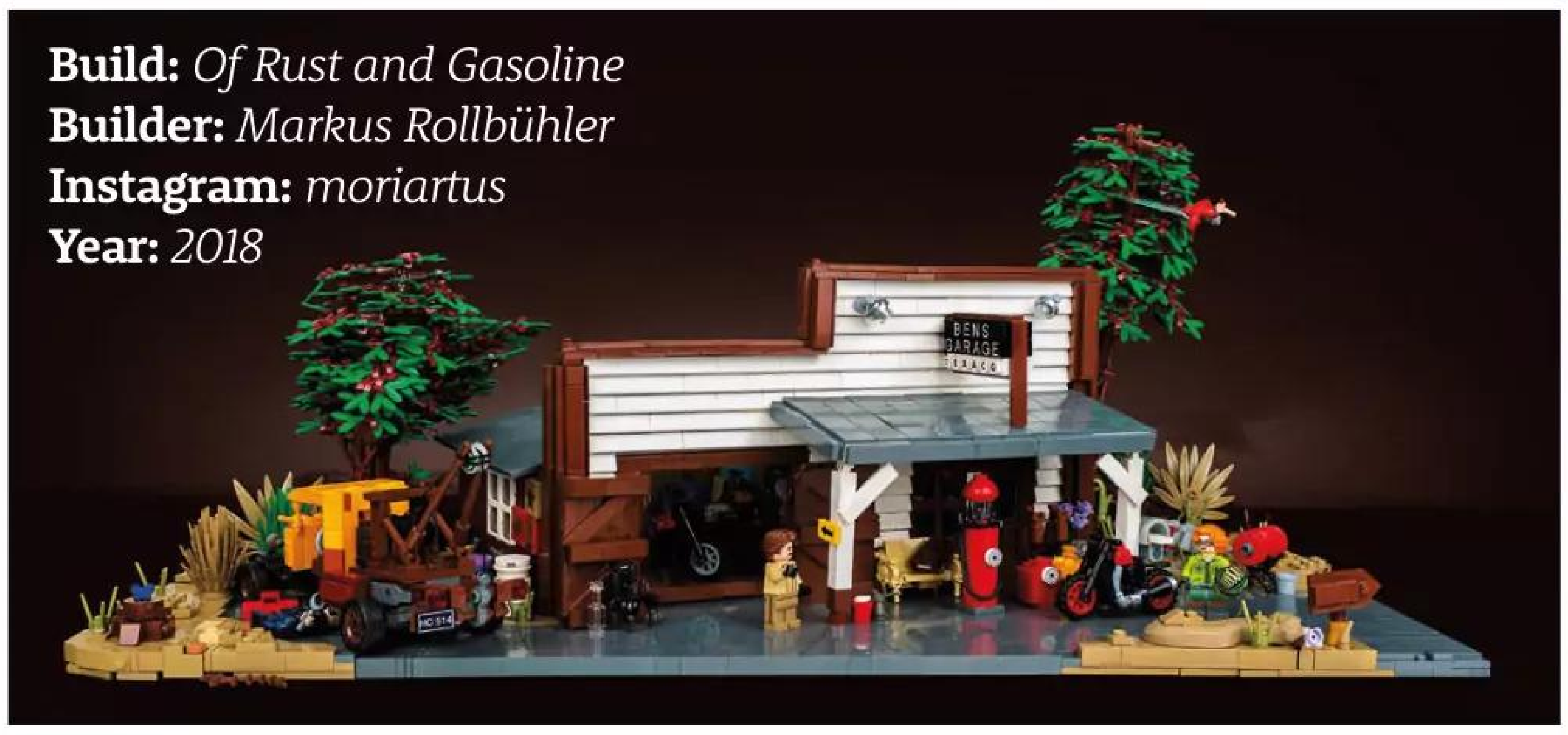
Build: *Red Rocket*
Builder: *Simon Liu*
Instagram: *si-mocs*
Year: *2021*



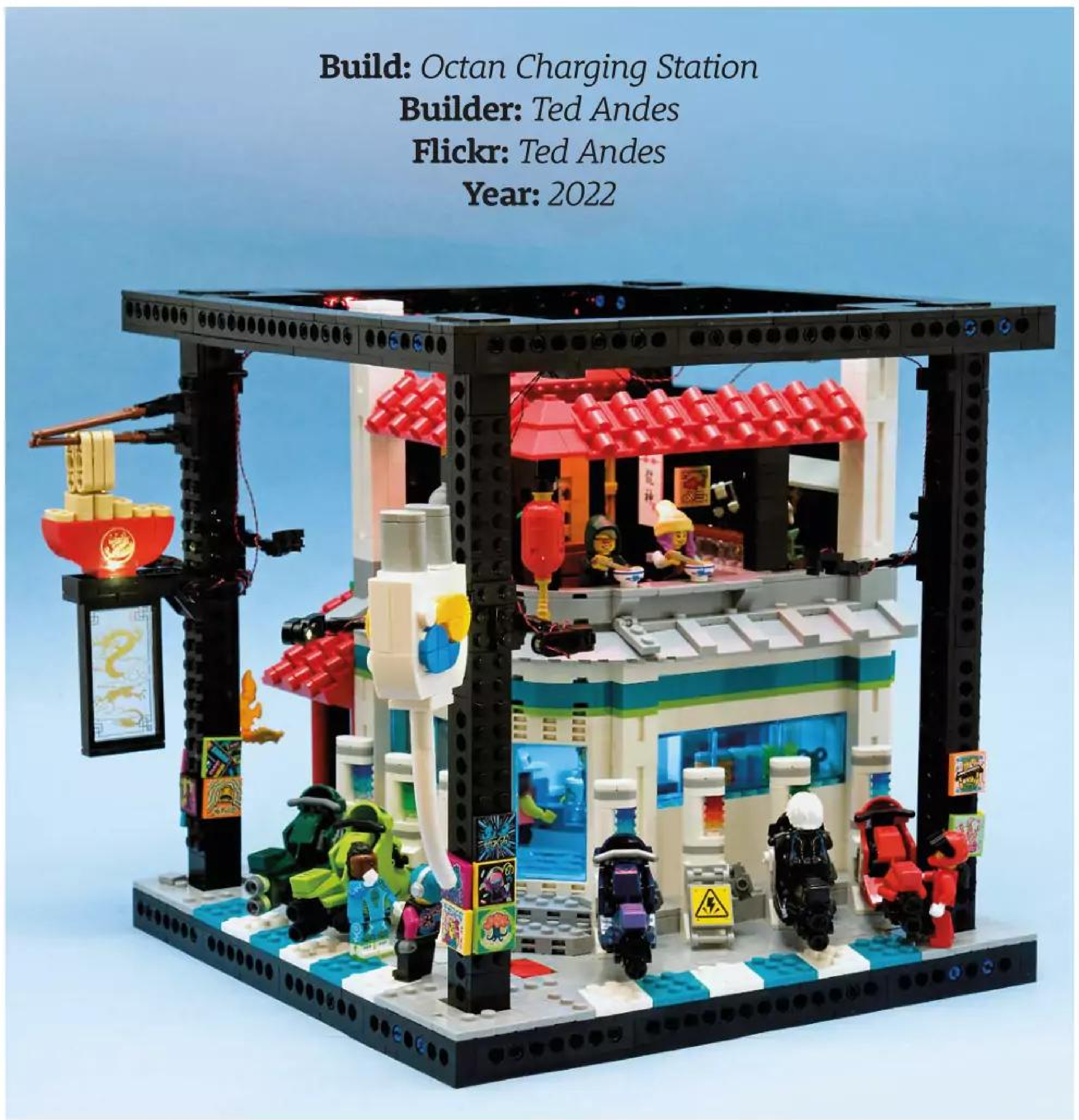
Build: *General Store*
Builder: *Andrea Lattanzio*
Instagram: *nortonsevenfour*
Year: *2020*

RADIATOR SPRINGS
KEEP OUT

Build: *Fallout 4: Red Rocket Refueling Station*
Builder: *Markus Rollbühler*
Instagram: *moriartus*
Year: *2015*



Build: *Of Rust and Gasoline*
Builder: *Markus Rollbühler*
Instagram: *moriartus*
Year: *2018*



Build: *Octan Charging Station*
Builder: *Ted Andes*
Flickr: *Ted Andes*
Year: *2022*

CITY STATION

Build: *General Store*
Builder: *César Soares*
Flickr: *Cesbrick*
Year: *2018*

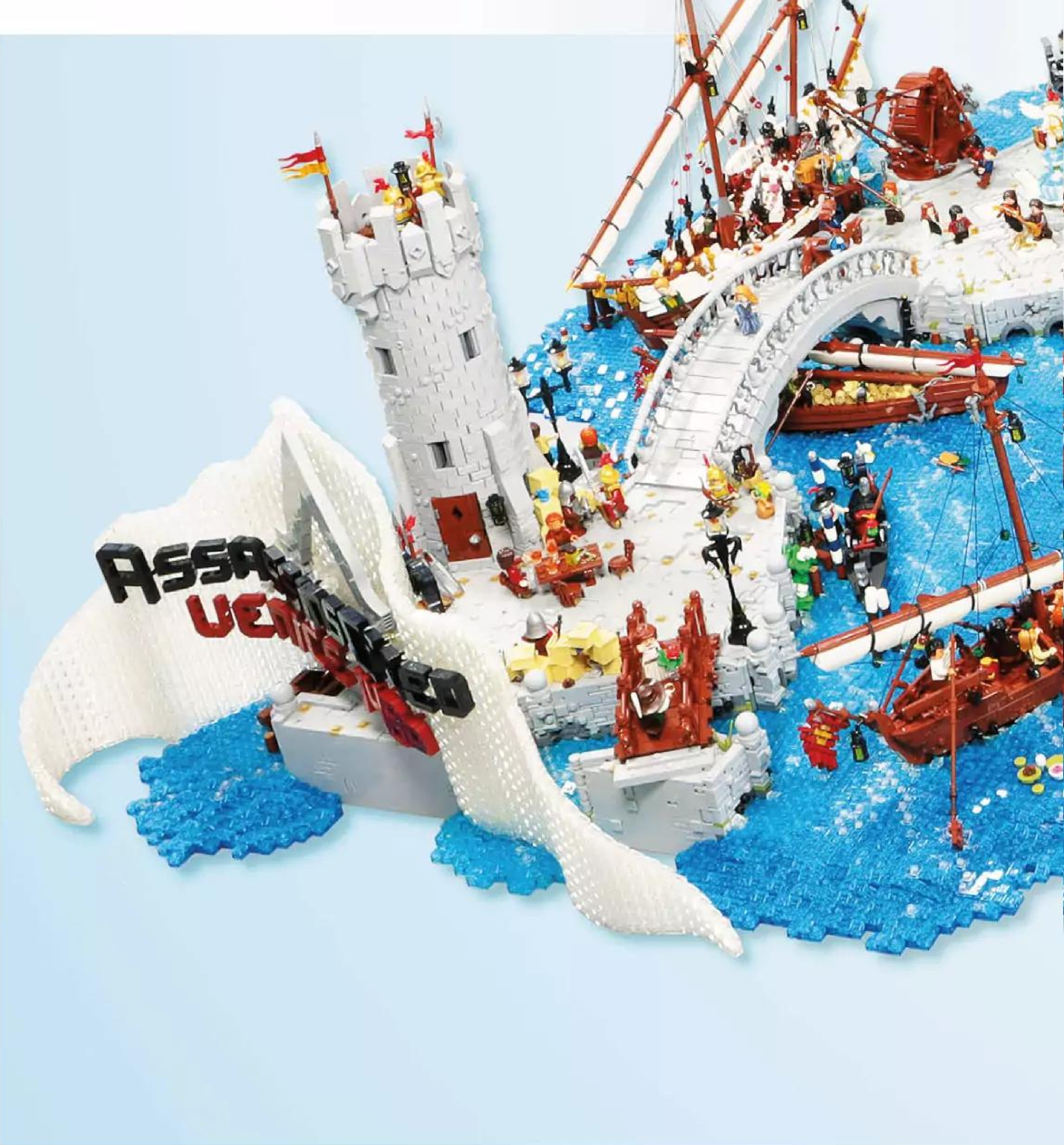
CHAMPION service
SHELL SERVICE
Firestone

Build: *Antique Gas Station*
Builder: *Andrea Lattanzio*
Instagram: *nortonsevenfour*
Year: *2018*

VENICE 1486: OSSERVARE

Every alley and canal tells a story in Bart Deliën's ultra detailed recreation of Venetian life as it was 439 years ago

Words: *Geneva Durand*

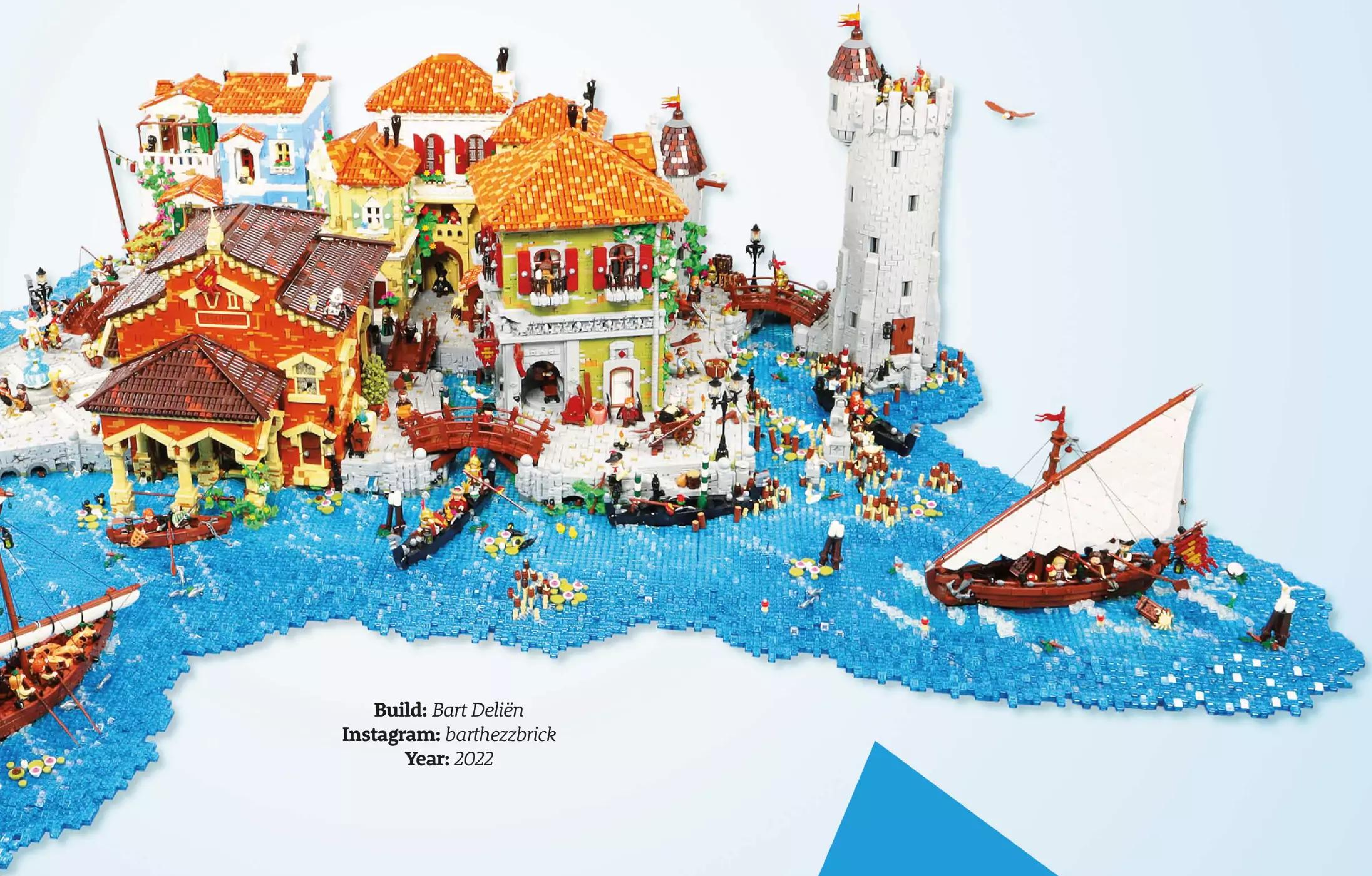


Many AFOLs have dreamed of building an entire city, but few have set aside the time to do it. Bart Deliën, however, built a city almost by accident – what started as 'something Venetian' turned into 3 years, 3,000 hours and a magnificent MOC with no compromises on detail through its nearly 300,000 LEGO bricks.

Inspired by a trip to Venice and the video game franchise Assassin's Creed, Bart's layout is set in the year 1486 and loaded with realistic historical details. Despite the size of the MOC, quantity has not taken a backseat to quality; every building and every boat is crammed with architectural ingenuity and realistic texture. It's a great example of what happens when a builder loves what they're doing and just keeps getting better and dreaming bigger.

As impressive as this MOC is, it only made it to a few local events before being dismantled. But it lives on in photos and in the continuing saga, because Bart is not finished with Venice yet – this massive waterfront is just the first of four chapters. Focused on the theme of 'observing,' the MOC features at its center a crouching assassin and his owl, preparing to strike… in another build!

Bart has been building since 2017, after a 20-year dark age brought on by the advent of Nintendo. As he rebuilt his old sets and ordered missing parts on BrickLink, he stumbled across the wonderful world of creative building and dove right in. All of his models share an attention to detail that includes highly textured buildings and landscapes as well as entertaining minifigure scenes. Not only does his passion for history and accuracy shine through every MOC, so does his skill with the LEGO brick. Bart's creations are full of unusual pieces used in fascinating and playful ways, as Venice 1486 demonstrates.



Build: *Bart Deliën*
Instagram: *barthezzbrick*
Year: *2022*

Blocks: What inspired you to build such a huge Venice-themed MOC?

Bart: A few years ago, my girlfriend and I were on vacation in Venice. While talking about the beautiful surroundings, buildings and architecture, my girlfriend challenged me to build something Venetian in LEGO bricks.

Given my love of history, I was eager to accept the challenge, but in my own way. Studying and building Venice's past appeals to me much more than recreating present-day Venice. I researched all sorts of details to be as accurate as possible. Were there lampposts back then? What professions were practiced there? Were the bridges made of wood or stone at the time? On and on my questions went and I found many details to include in my MOC.

How long did you spend on this build?

Up and down, a total of three years. That includes designing on the fly. I don't do anything digitally, I just build and see where things end up. It took three years because in the meantime we bought a new house and welcomed our first child. There were several points when I had other priorities than finishing a MOC!

I once estimated the number of hours and I calculated 3,000 to 4,000 hours in total.

What was your building process like for Venice 1486?

Because I don't design things and decide how they will look in advance, I make a lot of progress by rebuilding, rebuilding… and rebuilding. Others would go crazy doing that, but I like it. If I wasn't happy with a part or it didn't fit well in the layout, I went back to the drawing board.

You can see that clearly in the olive green building, for example. There used to be a whole other section attached to it, but that blocked the view of the buildings behind it. No matter how cool I thought the idea was, I eventually scrapped it for the sake of the rest of the MOC.

Another example is the light blue house. They might be small details, perhaps someone else wouldn't keep reworking them, but in the first version with the slope roof tiles the proportions just didn't feel right. The roof edge was too high, the balcony canopy was too coarse and the roof didn't fit in with the rest of the MOC. Normally I'm not really into consistency and I like variety, but for the roofs in the end I opted for a uniform style.

The model was not planned to be as big as it ended up being, but I kept building more things that I thought would add something. I felt like I could show more and a smaller MOC did not feel 'finished'.

The most extreme example is probably starting over completely and leaving out buildings, even buildings that I had almost or completely finished.

Venice looked very different at first, with an initial version of the olive green house and the nougat house. That building has undergone a considerable change. In the end I think I made five or six versions before I was really satisfied. I changed not only the look but also the proportions of the building.

What was the most challenging part of creating this MOC?

Apart from transport and eight hours of assembly time?!

Just bringing everything together was challenging. I wouldn't allow any compromise on the details or the result. And by everything, I really mean the decorations and the scenes. I started with these ideas one month before I was finished, then there was plenty of rebuilding and adjustments for that.

Perhaps another challenging point was the water. It's a parts intensive technique that felt like a never-ending story. In the end I am very happy that I did it. The result flowed, so to speak.

What are your favourite things about this build?

The lever base as shellfish, wands for fences and details in bridges. There is so much fun in building something that people can keep looking at and keep discovering something new.

I worked on the gondolas alone for days to achieve the result – the challenge I set myself was to make the gondola in such a way that it could be a set. I used techniques like the ones LEGO designers follow. This caused some headaches, but I did enjoy doing it.

In addition, I am proud of the variety of ships through the whole MOC. I studied what kinds of ships were there at that time, researched who Venice traded with and what they transported. Again, it was a pleasure to research for a build that is as historically accurate as possible.

I deviated from strict historical accuracy in two points – the use of water lilies in salt water (that doesn't happen, but I felt like it added to the model) and the watchtowers, which in Venice are hexagonal and not round. Since I had already used a hexagon approach in a previous The Lord of the Rings MOC I wanted to investigate whether I could build a nice round tower and eventually I went for it. I like the result!

Where have you displayed Venice 1486?

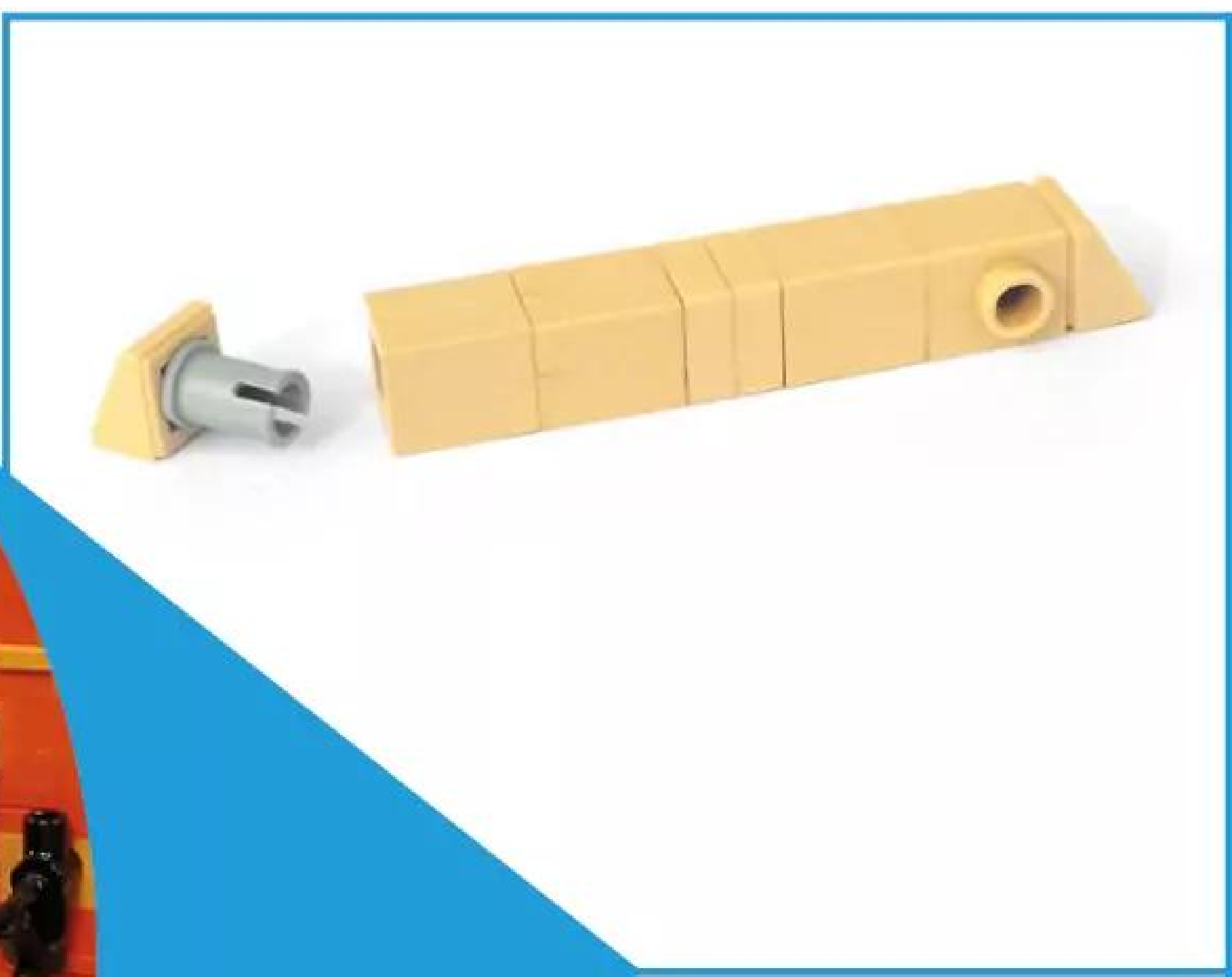
I displayed this MOC at LEGO World 2023, Lowlug XL (my LUG) and some other local events in the Netherlands. I do a maximum of two or three events each year – I like building more than I like dragging my MOCs to events.

After LEGO World I partly took this apart on the spot. Unfortunately, I am still sorting the parts two years later! It was too big to leave standing. The build was 2.5 metres wide and around 1.4 metres deep.

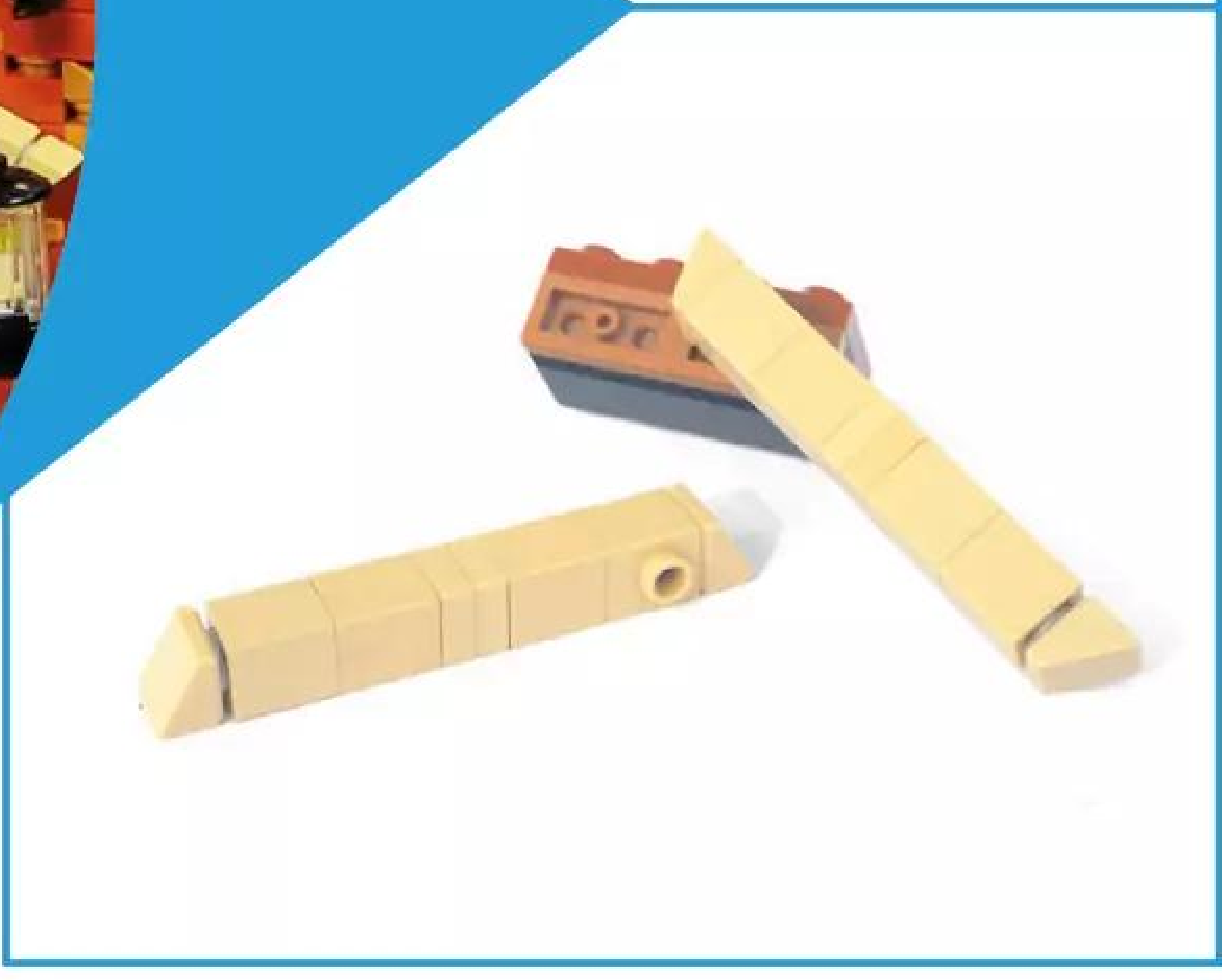
What's next for you? Do you have plans for more Assassin's Creed inspired MOCs?

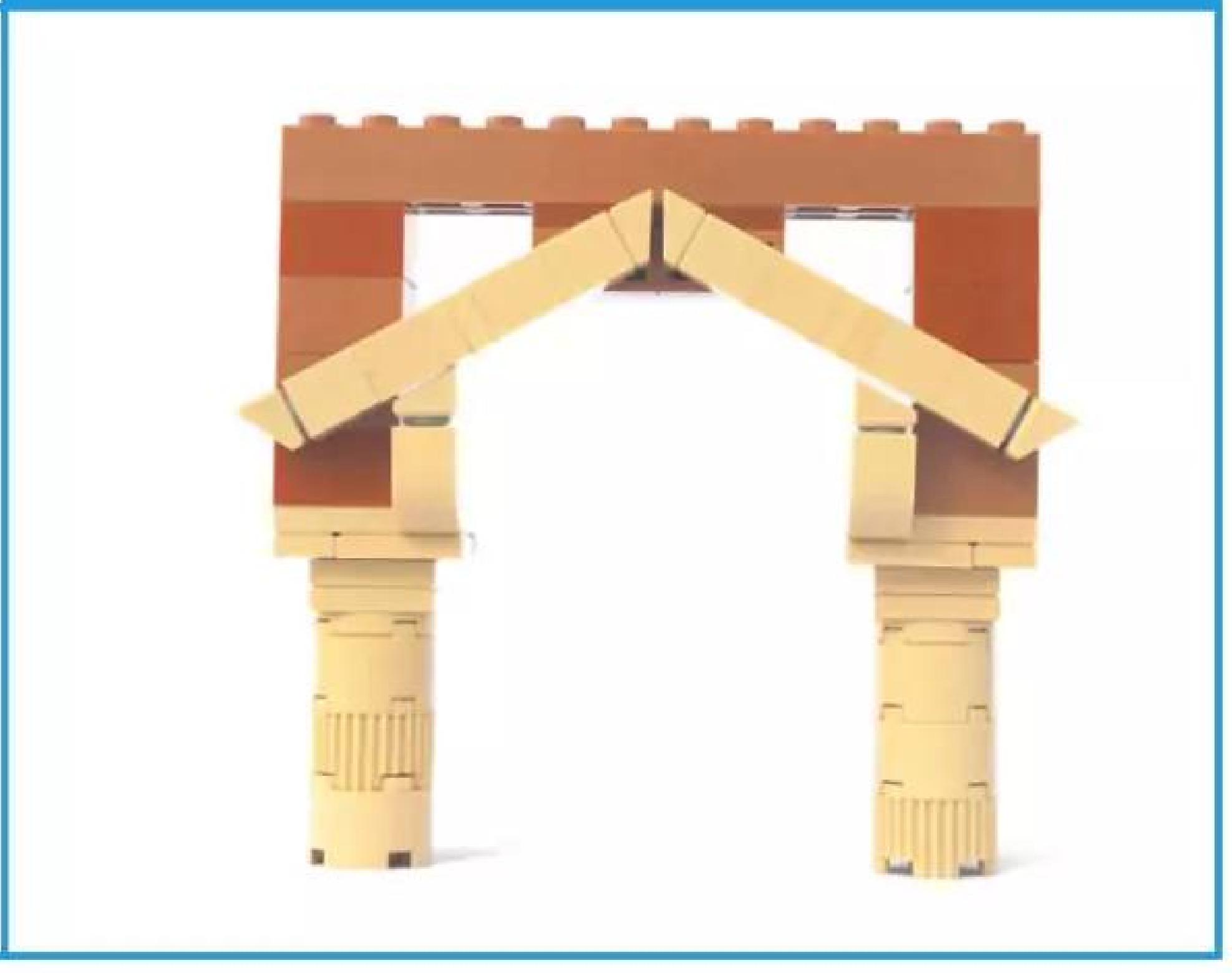
Well, there is even a new (intermediate) part of my Assassin's Creed saga, called 'Assassin's Creed: Venice 1486 — Interlude.' For this second MOC I used a church idea that I already had for the original layout that didn't make the cut.

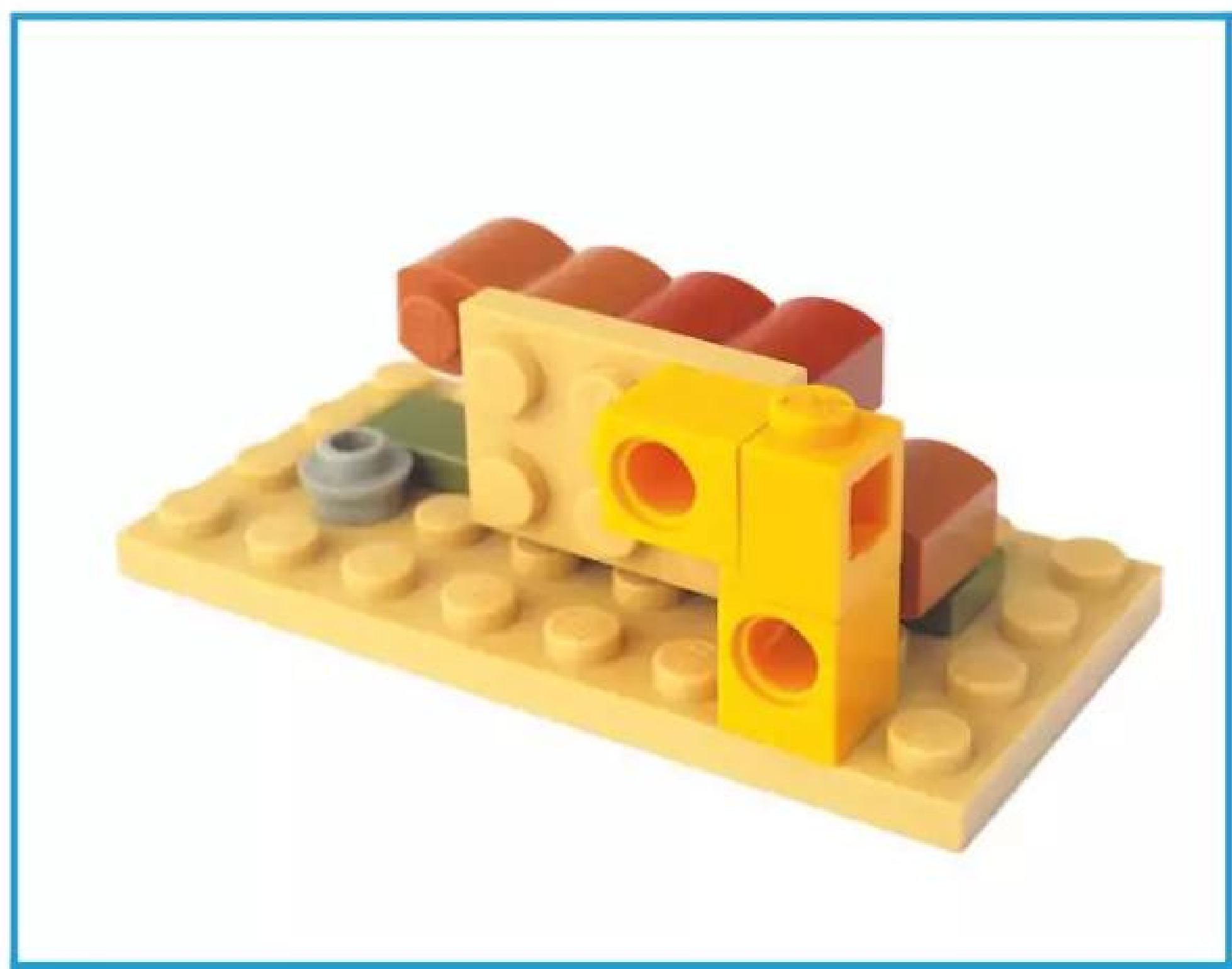
The goal is to make two or three big sequels in the future that will conclude the story. For now I'm working on a Dutch windmill – sometimes you want something different – set in 1933. So it is something historical again!

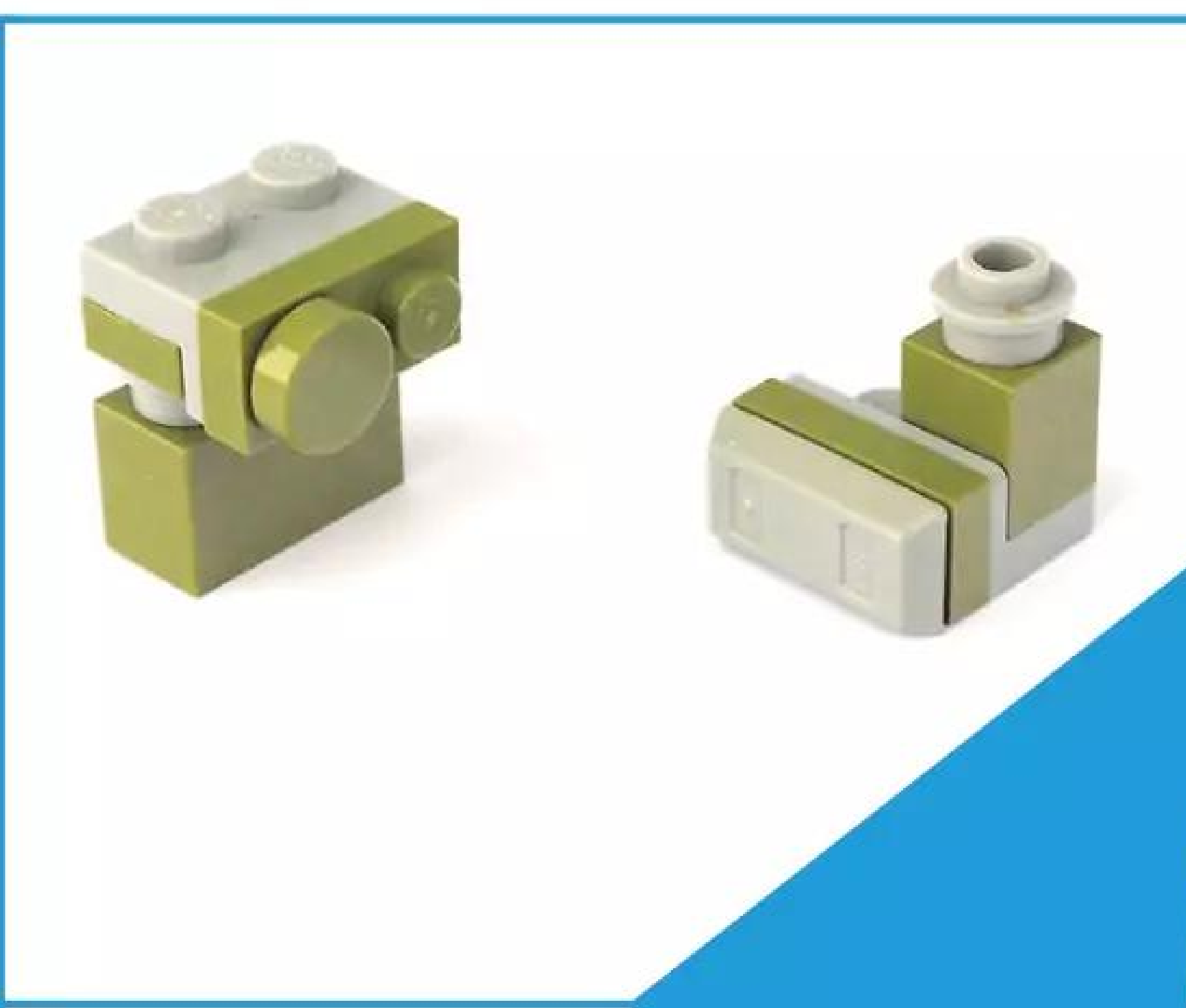


Bart makes ingenious architectural detail look simple by thinking outside the box and creating unusual connection points. The sideways base of 1x2 plates allows each half of the arch to be attached at just the right height with a simple SNOT brick, a clean and elegant solution.

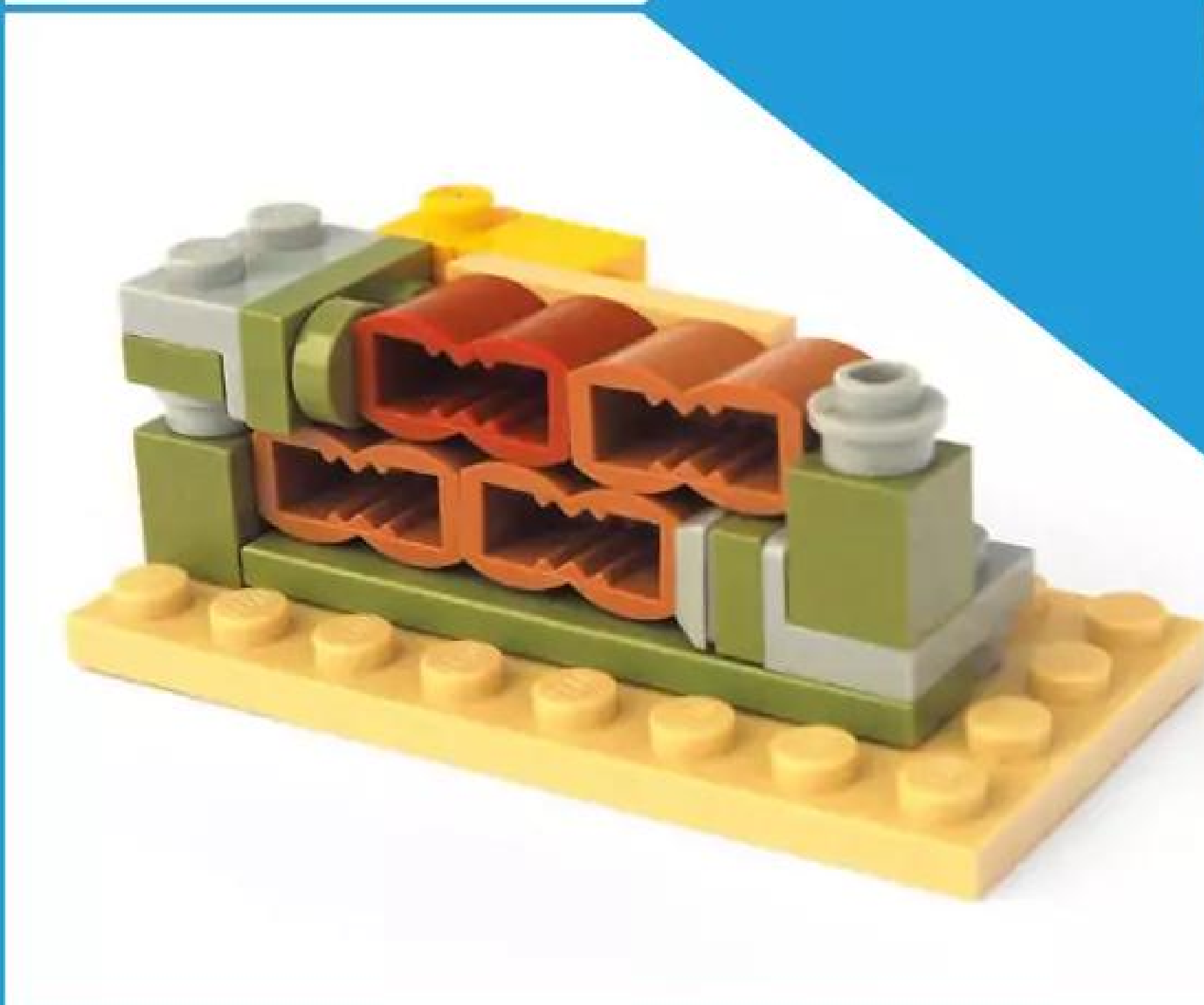


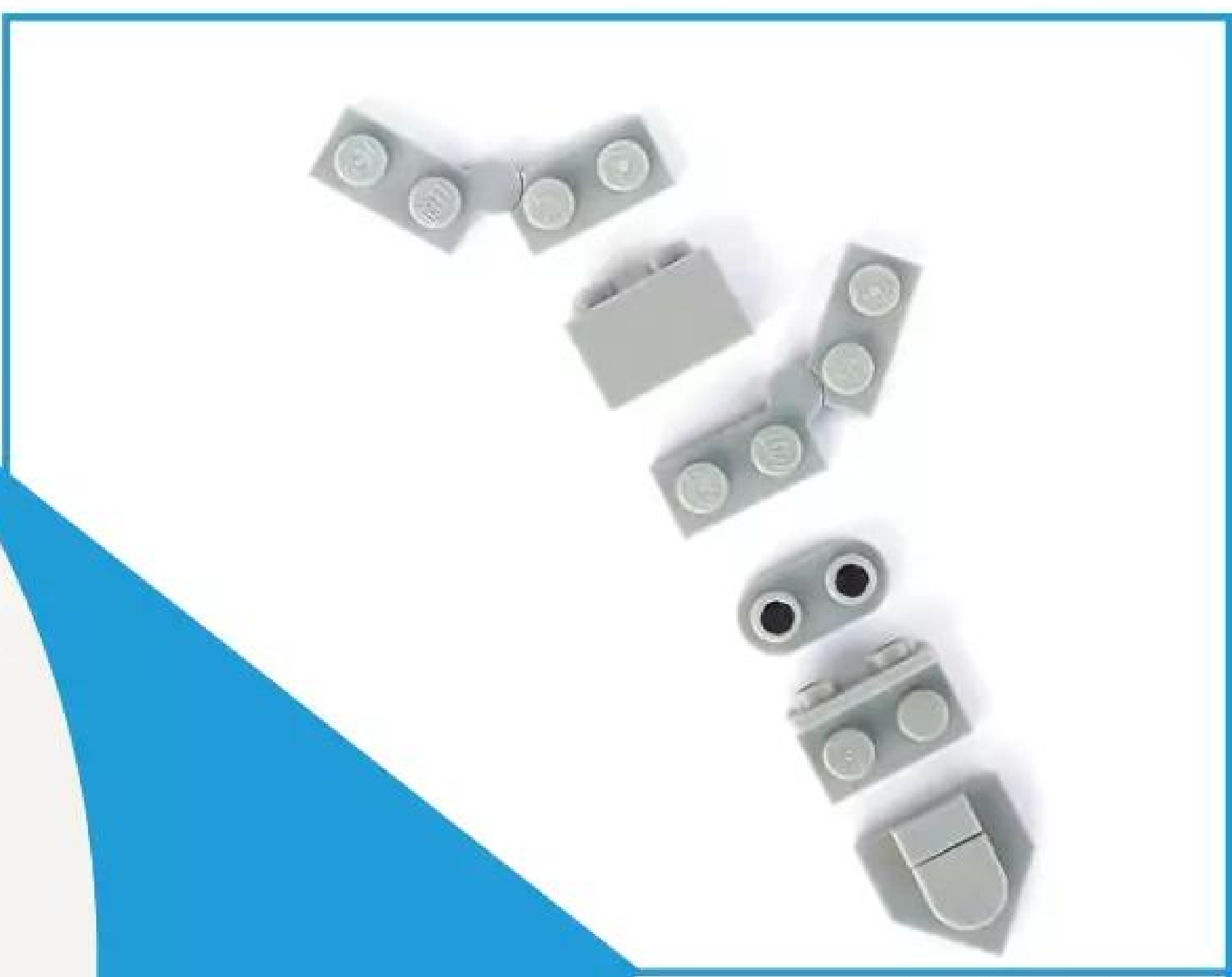




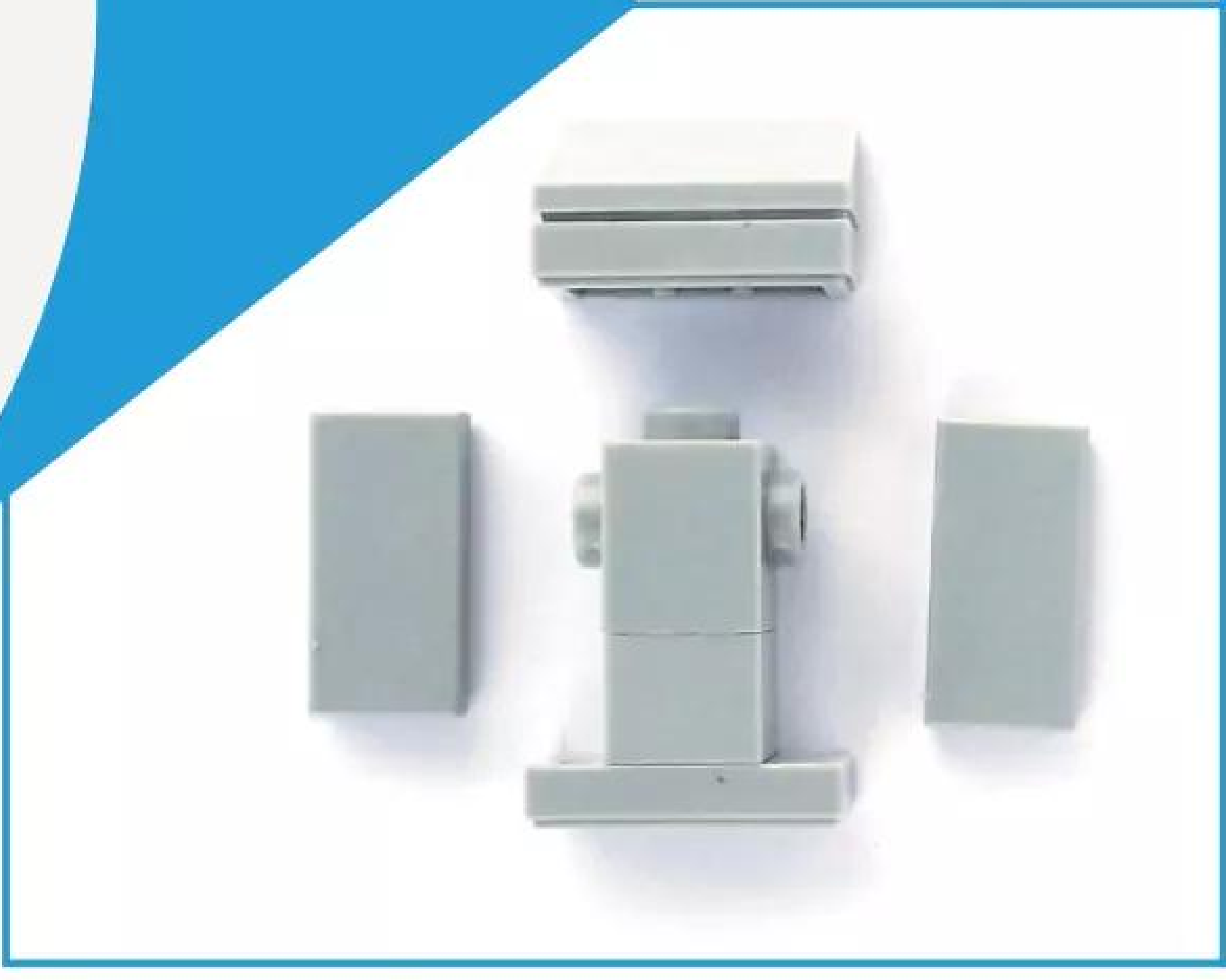


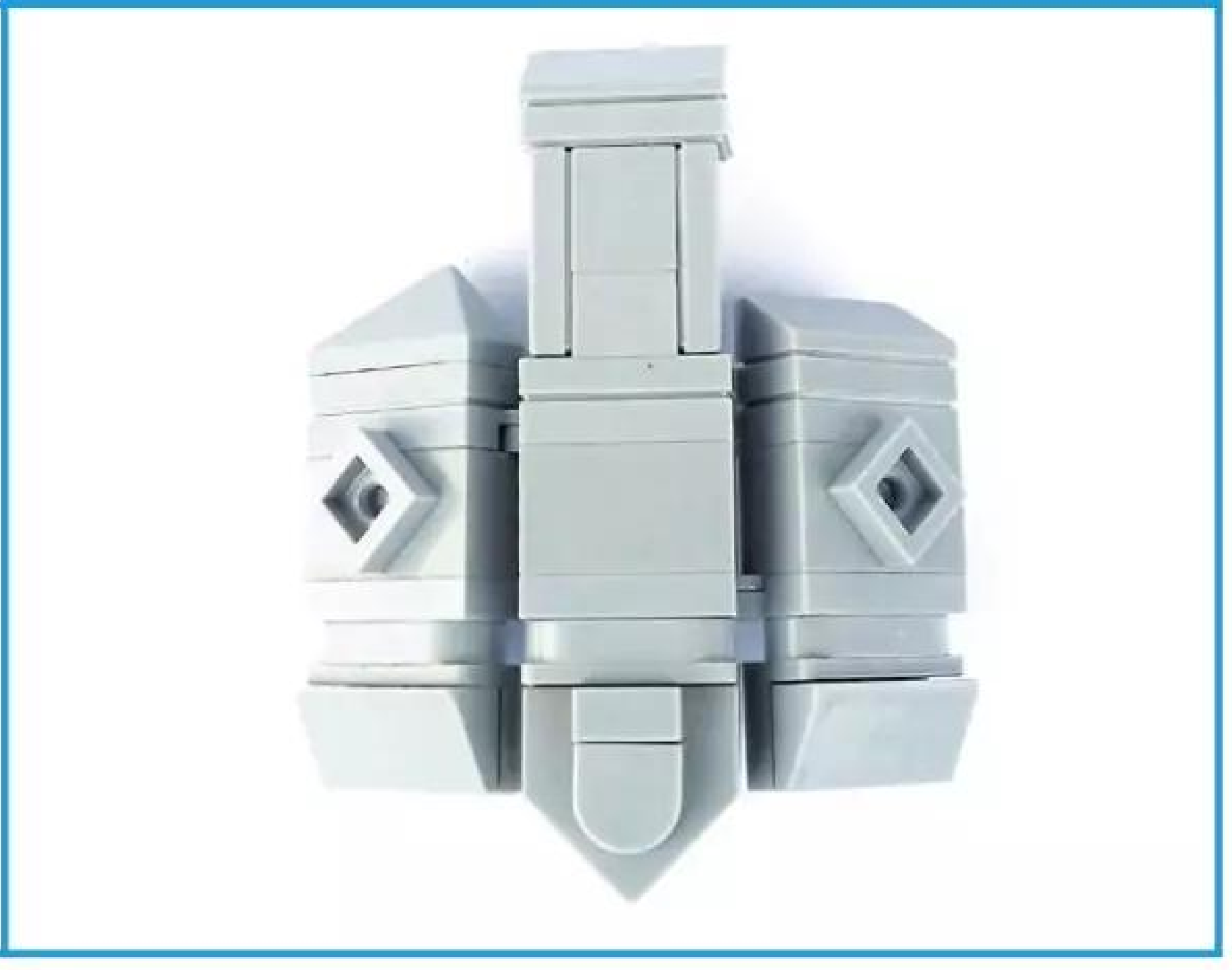
It's the little minifigure scenes that breathe life into large MOCs, like this corner where two masons finish building a house. Bart turned log bricks sideways to reveal their unusual, brick-like bottom texture. Brackets sandwich them into the rest of the wall and a few SNOT bricks around back provide a sturdy connection.



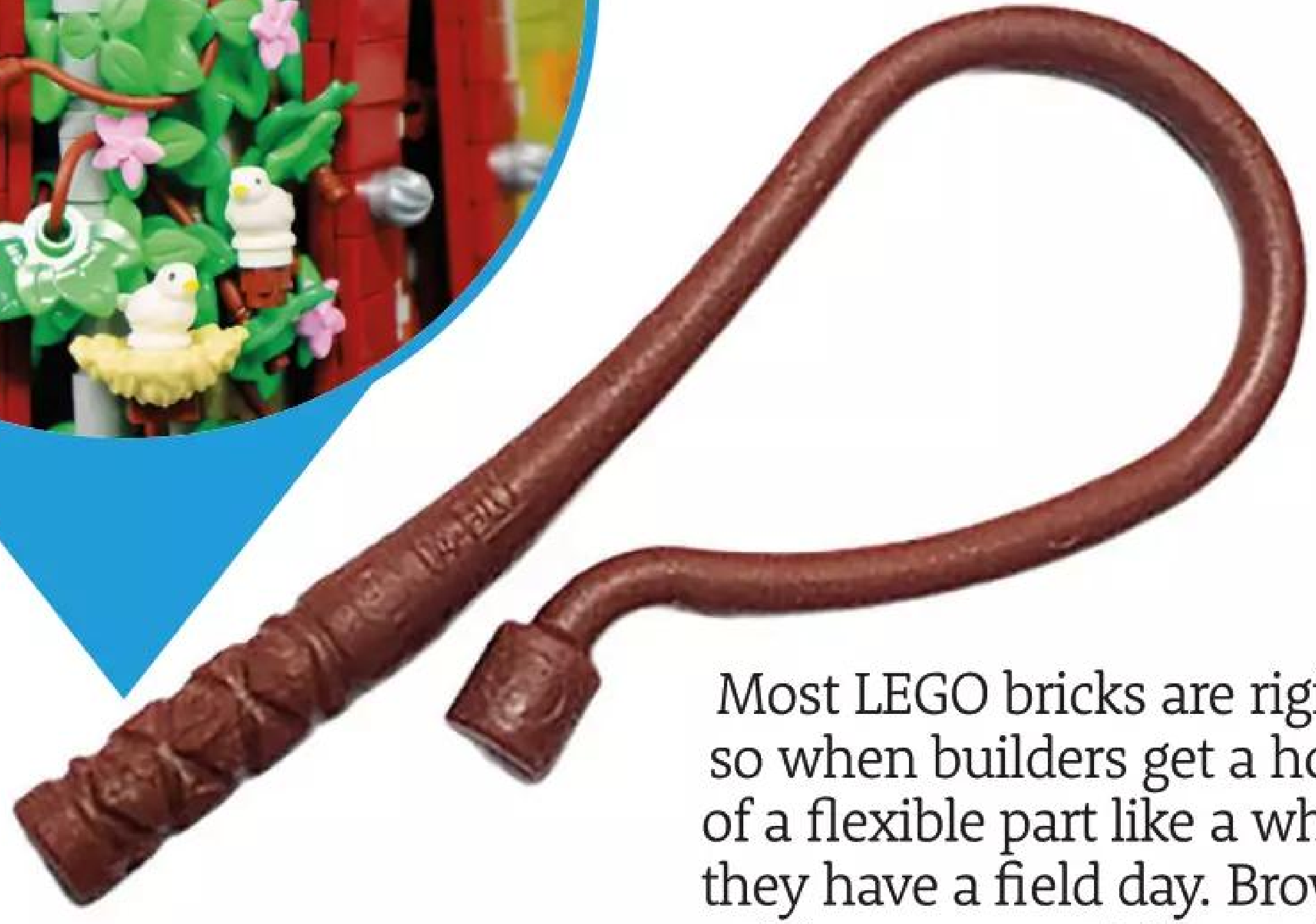


The crenelations on this tower are based off a simple pattern of bricks and hinge plates, with the underside of 1x1 plates creating a simple diamond pattern when inserted into 1x2 Technic bricks. The design expands underneath through the use of brackets, while up top a 1x1 brick with studs on both sides allows a small offset to be created for additional detail.



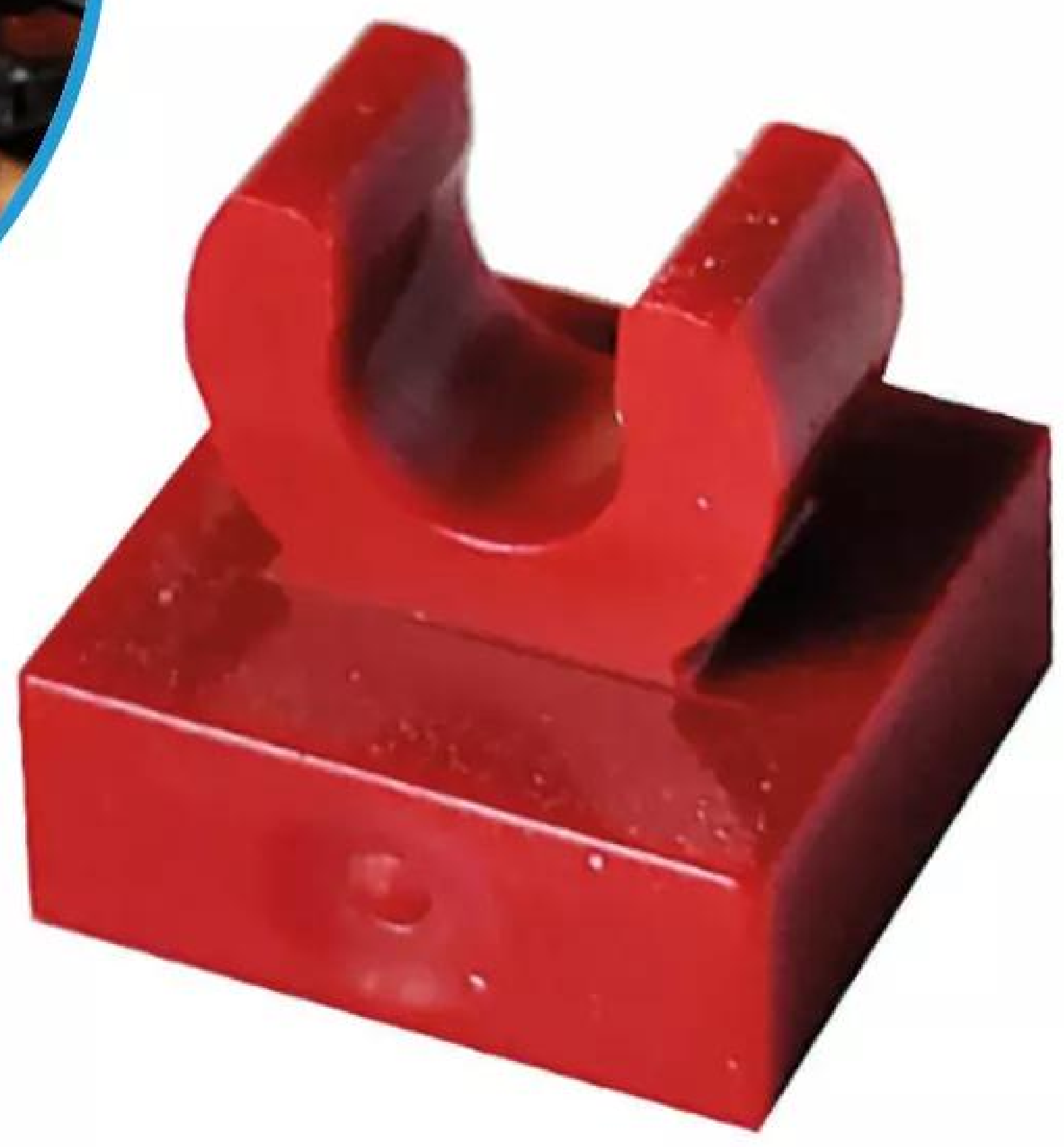


Part: *Whip*
BrickLink Name: *Minifigure, Weapon Whip Bent Flexible*
ID: *88704*



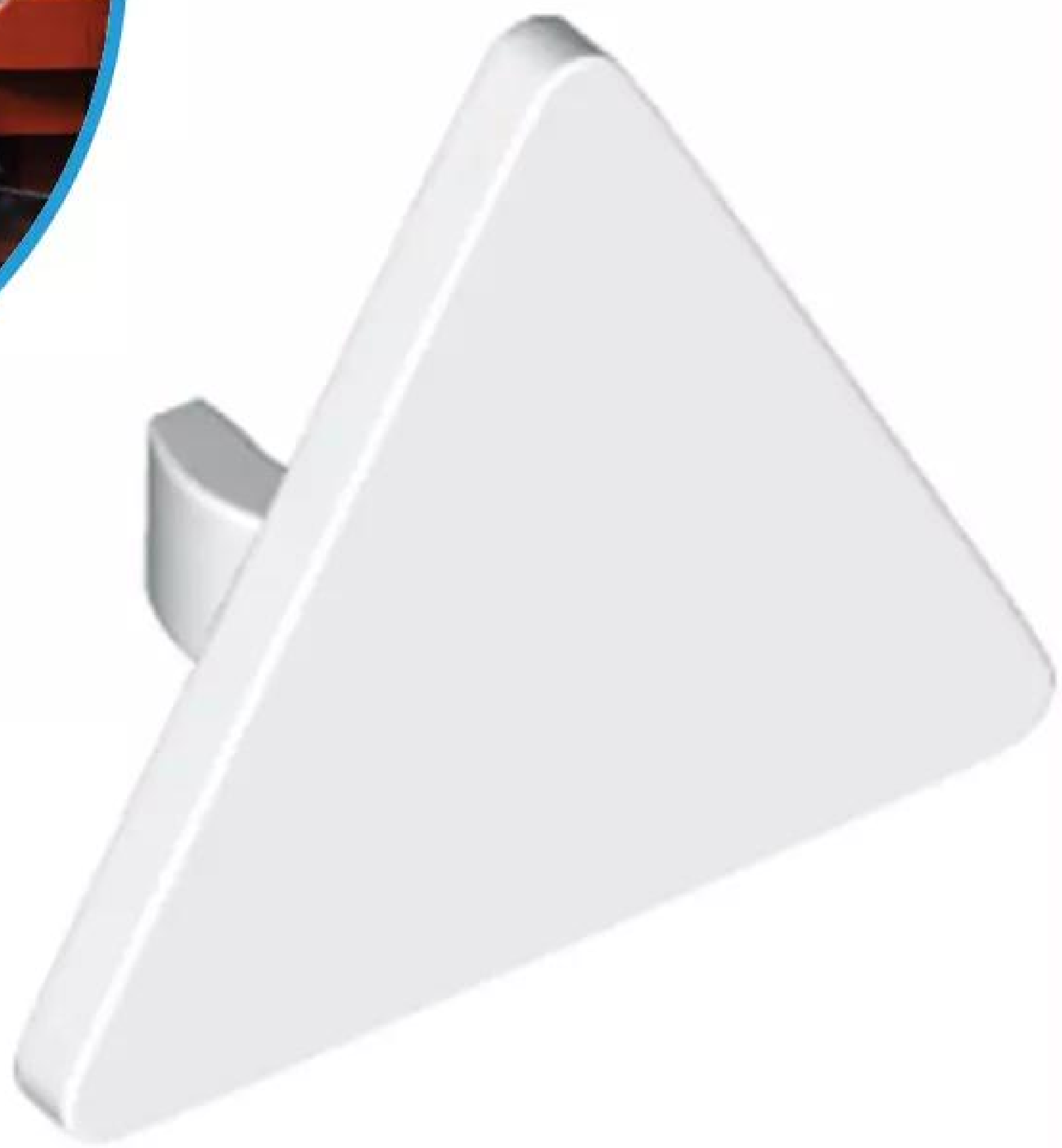
Most LEGO bricks are rigid, so when builders get a hold of a flexible part like a whip, they have a field day. Brown whips are especially useful in vegetation, allowing for unpredictable, organic shapes.

Part: *Clip Tile*
BrickLink Name: *Tile, Modified 1 x 1 with Open O Clip*
ID: *15712*



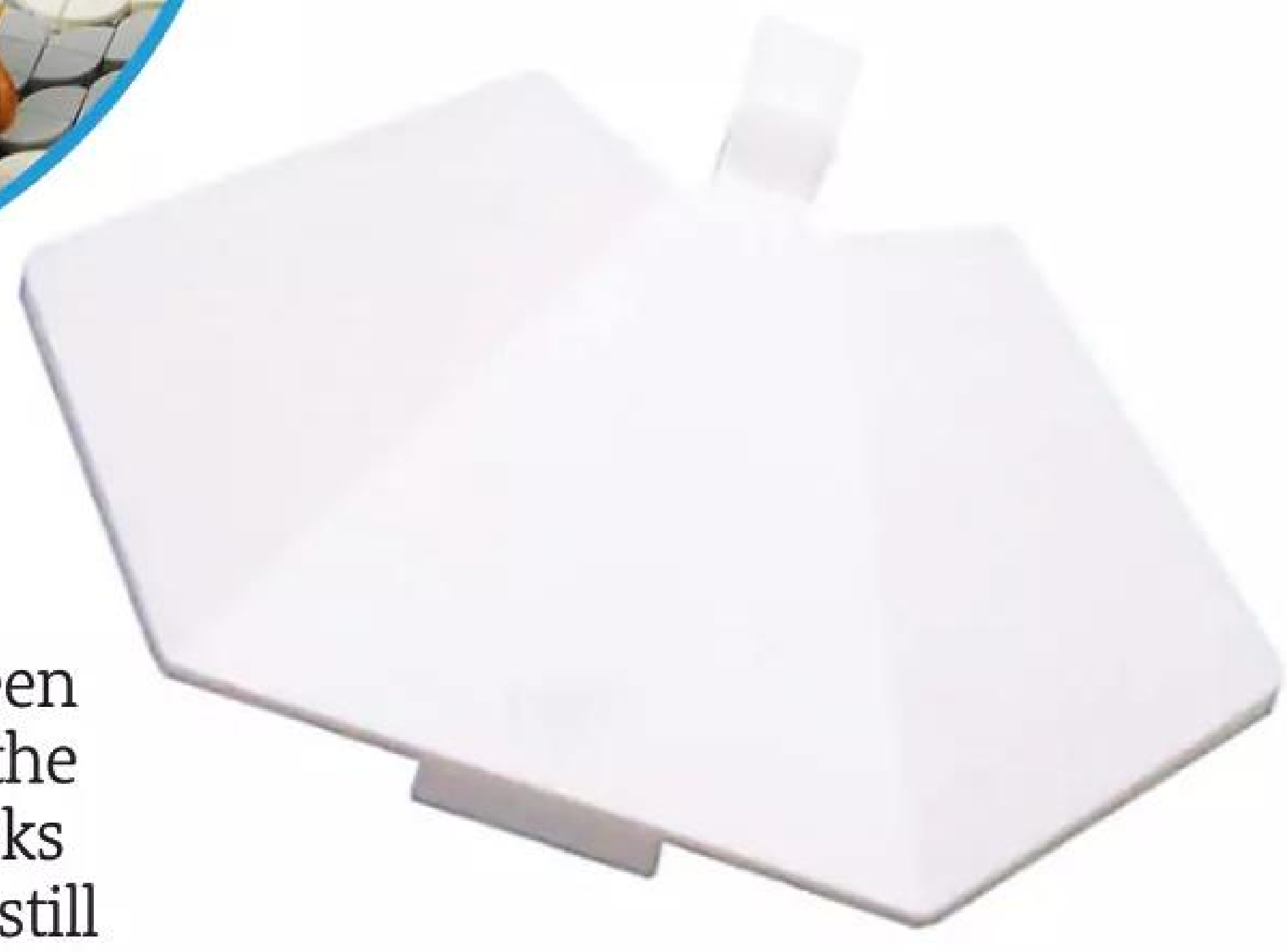
Nice part usage is not just about finding unusual pieces to shoehorn into MOCs – it's just as impressive to turn an ordinary part like the 1x1 clip tile into a patterned flag.

Part: *Triangle Sign*
BrickLink Name: *Road Sign 2 x 2 Triangle with Open O Clip*
ID: *65676*

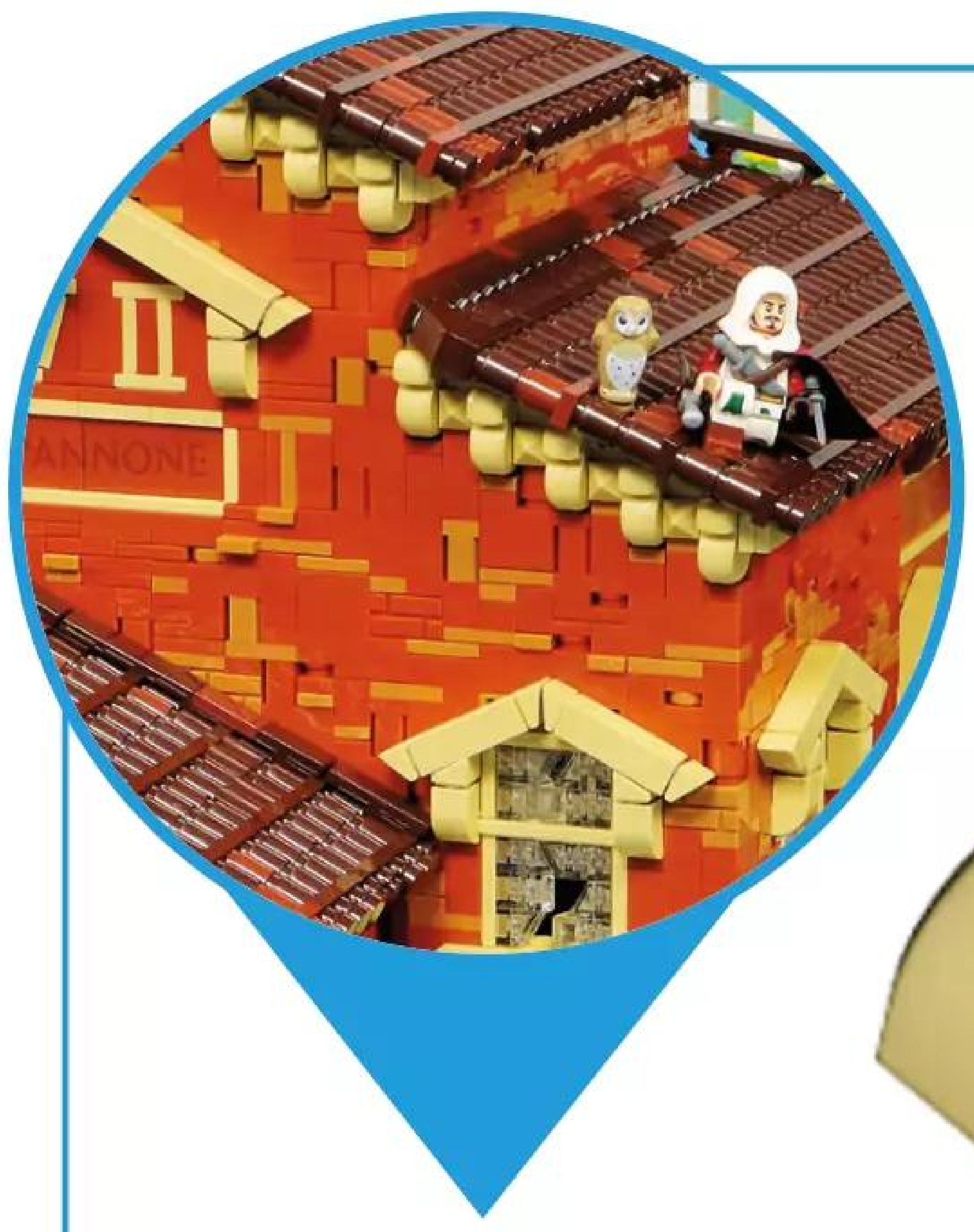


A few dozen flat triangular signs make a striking sail, crisscrossed with a diamond pattern rarely seen in LEGO builds.

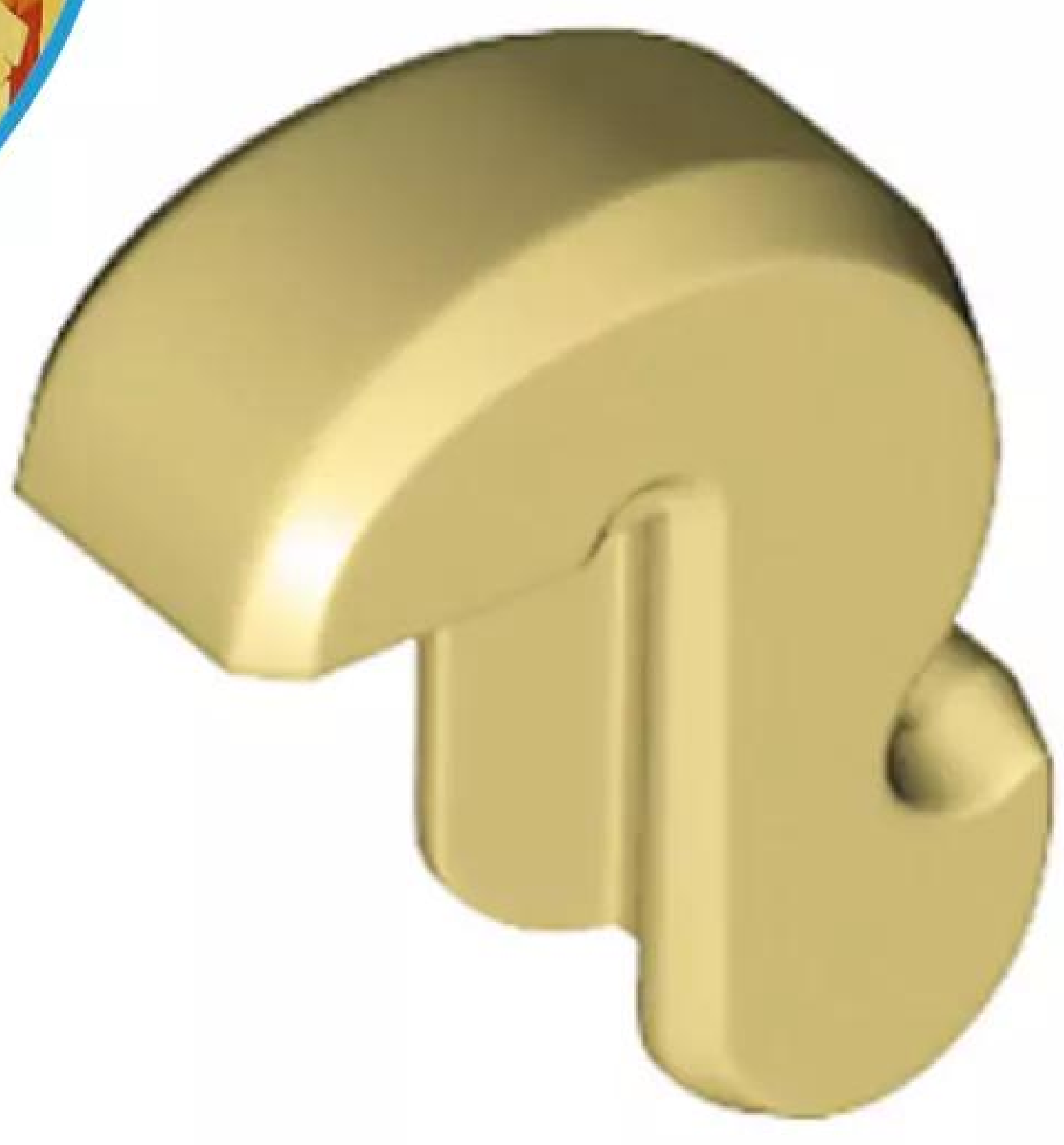
Part: *Flying Clip*
BrickLink Name: *Panel 3 x 5 Hexagonal with Bent Sides and Clip*
ID: *30034*



A part that hasn't been seen in a set since the turn of the century, this element looks like a clip with a cape but still fits perfectly into a venetian fountain.

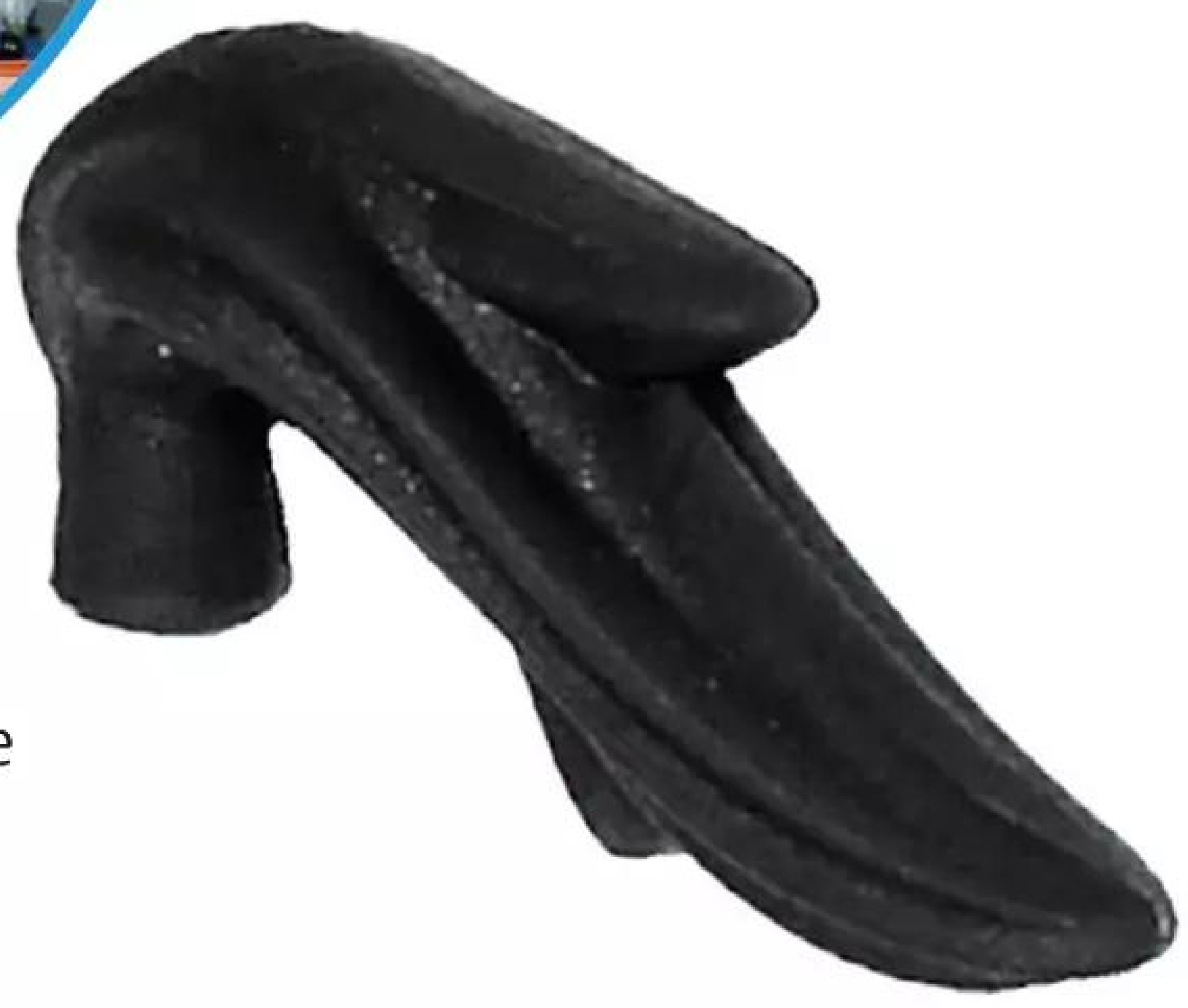


Part: *Tail*
BrickLink Name: *Cat Tail*
ID: *15429*



Who would have guessed that a piece originally designed as a tail for Unikitty from The LEGO Movie would make fantastic architectural detailing?

Part: *Ponytail*
BrickLink Name: *Minifigure, Plume Feather Ponytail*
ID: *22411*

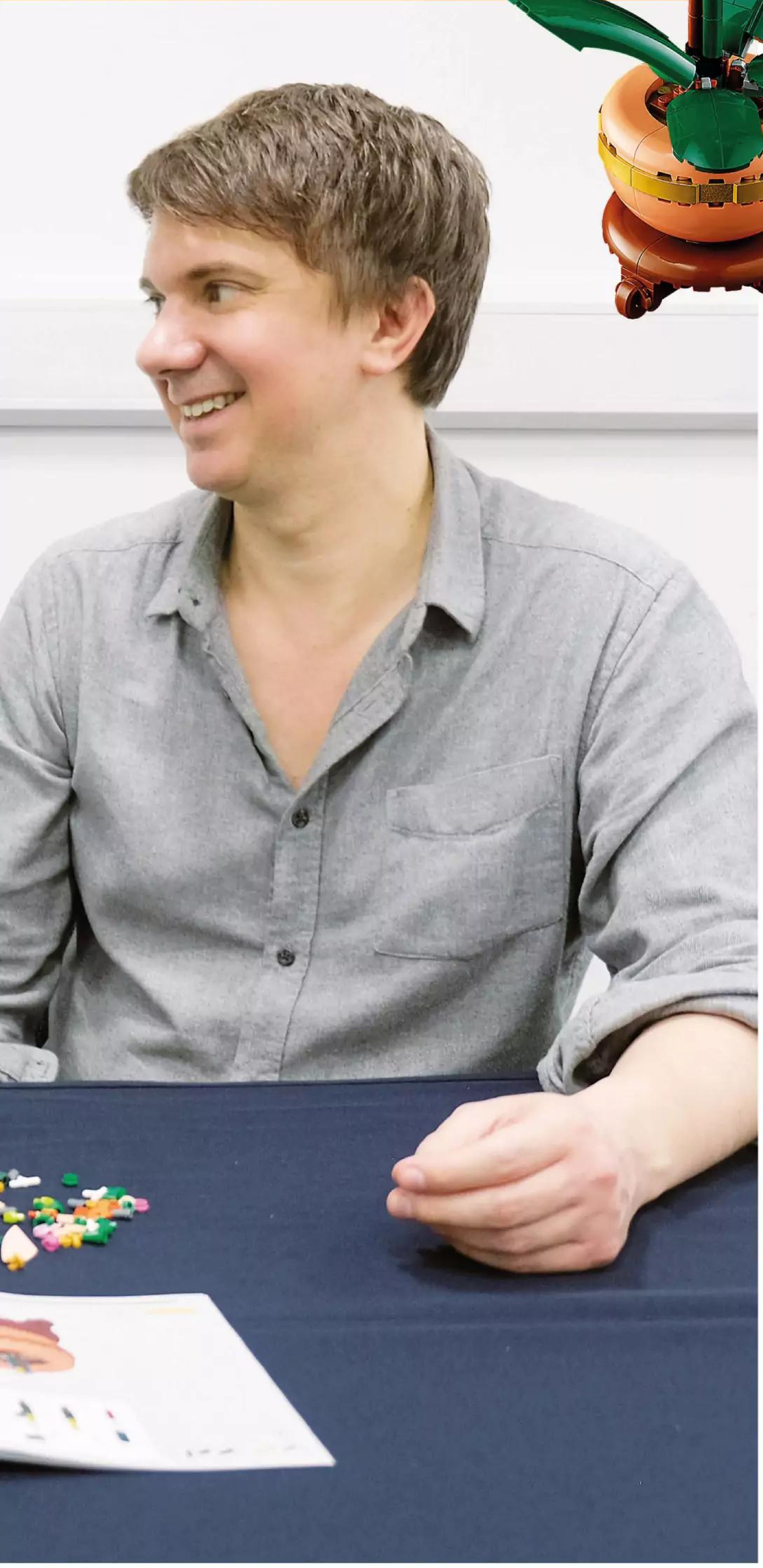


Odd as its shape is, this ponytail in black adds some creative renaissance-era detail to the lampposts in Venice 1486.

Build & chat with...

WES TALBOTT

Reflecting on his varied career at the LEGO Group so far, Wes Talbott tells Blocks Editor Graham E. Hancock about a journey that has taken him from conceptualising Elves to working on dream projects in model design



> "I've had a few really good years at the LEGO Group – I've completed annihilated my bucket list."

Senior Design Master Wes Talbott had an enviable childhood setup – an entire LEGO room with pieces everywhere. He joined the LEGO Group to work on concepting Elves before becoming a model designer and hasn't looked back since. Wes has worked across a huge variety of themes, including Friends, VIDIYO, Harry Potter, Ideas, Disney and Botanicals. Uniquely, one of his models has been spectacularly destroyed on the big screen. When he sits down at Bricktastic 2025 for a Build & Chat, there's only set available to put together… the set he designed, 10343 Mini Orchid.

Graham E. Hancock: When did you first come across LEGO bricks? What is your childhood background?

Wes Talbott: I think I was about three when I started. My first sets were from the Space Police II line, so stuff like the little [6852] Sonar Security, with the trailer and rocket, then mostly a bunch of those smaller sets. I never had Duplo, I just jumped straight into System.

Graham: Was it always Space or was there a variety of themes?

Wes: There was variety, but I would say mostly City and Space. Sadly, I never had Ice Planet, but my cousins did; I had a lot of friends and family and so got to experience the themes I didn't have.

Graham: In the beginning, were you building from instructions or were you always pulling sets apart and doing different things with them?

Wes: I was encouraged to build different things. I only had a bunch of small sets, so it was easy to try and build something out of them. By the time I was between six and eight, I would always have my LEGO bricks out. My mum would tell me to clean it up, but then I'd have it all out again within an hour, so I convinced her to let me have one of the rooms in our basement. As a kid, I already had a LEGO room [laughs]. It was so chaotic; I ended up just spilling bricks all over until the floor was covered. The entire floor was basically my bin. I remember I had calluses on my knuckles because it was a rough carpet and I would crawl around like a monkey.

Graham: What sort of things were you building?

Wes: I was building Star Wars before LEGO Star Wars came out and so was obviously super excited when that finally did come out officially. Same with Spider Man – I used to make custom minifigures, so I made a custom Spider-Man, Daredevil, Blade.

Graham: Would you just mix up official pieces or draw on them to get the look you wanted?

Wes: I would try and paint them. When I was younger, I wasn't super confident with a brush, so I'd ask my mum to draw Spider-Man eyes on my pieces. I'd also make stuff from TV shows. I remember watching a show called Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot – it was a sort of knock off Astro Boy – and I tried to build from that. I don't have pictures, but that's a core memory of something I tried to build. I only have one photo of me ever playing with LEGO sets – I'm around eight

and I'm building a huge Star Wars hangar bay but it has stripes of coloured pieces where I'd run out of black pieces.

Graham: Did you have other creative hobbies as a kid?

Wes: I've always been artistic. My mum was also very artistic, she taught me how to draw and paint …all that stuff. I got into comic books at a very young age as well, then started drawing Marvel super heroes and things like that.

Graham: At what point in your education did you gravitate towards creative subjects?

Wes: In the senior year of high school, I tried to think of literally anything other than a creative education, because even though my parents were both creative, I had that stigma of designers not making enough money to make a living. I went to community college and took some courses, but I didn't like them; then a friend of mine went to Columbus College of Art and Design to study their Fine Art programme. He had so many good things to say that I decided to go for it. I immediately knew it was the right thing – I was energised by all of the courses and, to this day, I'd gladly go back and do college again. I had so much fun.

Graham: What did you cover as part of that course?

Wes: I majored in illustration, but we studied the fundamentals of painting, sculpting, drawing, but then we also dipped into areas like graphic design and art history.

In my junior year, I started dating my now wife, and her brother was still buying LEGO sets. It was when LEGO The Lord of the Rings came out and he had all of it; seeing those sets in his house, I really wanted them. I ended up buying the whole wave and then brought all my LEGO pieces from my home to my apartment. I saw Zelda stuff in CUUSOO, as it was then – LEGO The Lord of the Rings was amazing, but I thought LEGO Zelda would just be the coolest, so I started working on a CUUSOO project.

At the time, I wasn't considering working for the LEGO Group, but I found a guy on DeviantArt who had done a magazine cover illustration for the LEGO company. He shared some contacts and I did a few pieces, but I was mostly into fantasy stuff. In my teenage years, with the release of The Lord of the Rings movies, I had made a hard pivot from super heroes and Star Wars to fantasy. I liked to paint fantasy illustrations, and then, fortunately, around that time they were looking for a concept artist to work on what would eventually become LEGO Elves. It was listed on the website as a LEGO Friends concept, a new line focused on girls, but it wasn't until I got here that I realised it was a fantasy theme.

Graham: Just jumping back a minute, how long did your dark age last for?

Wes: I think it started around the age of twelve. I remember the day

Far right: *Wes started his LEGO journey with Space Police II.*

Centre right: *After discovering Ideas, then called CUUSOO, Wes submitted a Zelda build to the platform.*

Right: *Wes was part of the team concepting Elves, then worked on 41073 Naida's Epic Adventure Ship as a model designer.*

SPACE POLICE

> "I liked to paint fantasy illustrations, then the LEGO Group was looking for a concept artist to work on LEGO Elves."

that it happened, because every day I would go down to the basement and build for sometimes up to eight hours straight. It was my main hobby. But then one day I went down, sat down in my pile, then couldn't think of anything to build. I was really sad and went upstairs and told my mum. Now I know about the AFOL community – that's what I needed – but I was not aware of it at all then and I didn't go online much.

Graham: If you had that many pieces and had been building that much, it's not surprising you got through so much creative juice so early.

Wes: When I got back into it, when LEGO The Lord of the Rings sets came out, I stumbled across MOCpages; I saw some stunning big castles and realised that people made an art form out of LEGO pieces. Being at art school at the time, that realisation was key.

Graham: When you started with the company working on Elves, was it purely illustration or did you work with bricks at all?

Wes: I was hired as a freelance concept artist and had two contracts. It was during my junior year, so I had to get permission from my professors to go and do it; the LEGO Group flew me over and I got exposed to the environment, met some designers and was building a little in LDD [LEGO Digital Designer]. There were a few times when I would work on a drawing and then would mock it up in LDD to get some inspiration; I'd finish those designs after work and I showed them to a few designers.

I was mostly working with Ewa Delgado, who's no longer at the company, but she was a big part of Exo-Force and then starting up Friends as well. Then there was Rosario Costa, who I was talking to the whole time. At the end, they said they really enjoyed working with me as a concept artist and that I should keep an eye on the jobs page.

After my second trip, I went home and kept an eye open and shortly after that two model design positions went live. I didn't know it was a model designer for Elves! It was cool to keep working on it and I actually ended up seeing it all the way through until its last year.

Graham: Can you describe those weeks concepting? That must be a fascinating part of the process.

Wes: There was one other guy that they hired to also sketch concept art, because we had three different concepts to work on, so we kind of like split it up a bit. Otherwise, it was just us and Ewa, but she was more the art director. We would make a big visual and then have a bunch of models, characters and stories. Then we would show them to the kids and ask them what they liked, what they thought was going on and just see how much they could get from one image. If they could get it, we knew we had something we could then translate onto packaging.

Graham: Was the story that underpinned Elves part of the concepting or at that point were you just trying to establish a theme's visual look, with the story coming later?

Wes: At the beginning, it's just thinking about what the characters look like and the universe in general. It was a lot of figuring out that the trees and rocks were different colours; I think the elves originally had tinges of their elemental colour in their skin, but when we tested it, the kids thought it was a bit weird. But we did have the story too because at the beginning we had a portal with a girl coming through into the fantasy world and that was the hook that kids really liked – the idea that they could enter this world.

Once you start to develop the product line, then you're working with external writers on the TV show, the licensing departments and partners elsewhere too. It was a tight group coming up with the story, because if we had an idea for a product, we could pitch it to see where it would fit in.

Graham: How long was it between you doing the concept work and then starting with the LEGO Group as a model designer?

Wes: It was very short. I think I finished my last freelance gig in April of 2013, I graduated that May from college, got married in June, then I got the job in August and moved. It was *the* year. [Laughs]

Graham: So when you started in model design, were you doing concept models or were you coming up with models that would be finished?

Wes: Maybe you've heard before, but we go through what we call 'P Phase' and then 'M Phase' – I started right at the beginning of P Phase. I went from the very early concepts, which is when I was illustrating, then that gets handed over to the design team and they begin the concept phase. I got hired right at the beginning of that process.

Graham: How much building did you do for Elves at that point?

Wes: I started with two $30 sets, [41074 Azari and the Magical Bakery and 41073 Naida's Epic Adventure Ship]. It was interesting because obviously we had Friends already, so we had learned a lot about designing for girls in that theme, then we translated that over and gave it a fantasy skin. For me, it wasn't really until the second year that the Elves identity really started to pick up.

We had a few things with figuring out the roof shape or a few key elements like the fence that we created to give this new theme its own vibe. But we were still using the square 16x16 base plate, which was a Friends thing; later, we had the rounded plates to make a more organic vignette, which became the standard for Elves, then later we started bringing that into Friends.

Graham: When I think back to those sets, everything about them has that organic aspect, but I don't know if I consciously registered it at the time. Even the dragons were built in a curvier, less rigid way than dragons from other themes.

Wes: I think that's partly due to the mini-doll and pet design language for the sculpted elements. It's all about the soft, rounded

shapes. The mini-doll exists to change things about the minifigure that some kids weren't vibing with, like the faceted design style. We had to carry that into the dragons, which is tricky because they're brick built and full of sharp edges. I think we landed in a nice place with the dragon head – it wasn't completely rounded because then it would have been too jarring alongside the bricks.

Graham: Are there any particular Elves sets that you remember working on and being particularly happy with when they were finished?

Wes: After the first year, which was a concept test, we had established it was all about the portal, then it was about Emily wanting to come back, so for the second year it was a question of where we go next. As a big fantasy fan, I thought dragons were a good place to start. It was really fun because it was such a close-knit team – there were only three model designers and the creative lead – so me, Amelie Labarthe, Adam Vaughn, who was my mentor, alongside the graphic designers.

But the set that comes to mind is the market with the library and blacksmith [41176 The Secret Market Place]. It was interesting because, as a theme, in the first year we didn't want any conflict and we considered doing a peaceful fantasy world. But it's very medieval fantasy to have a blacksmith, so I had a shield with a beautiful sticker and a sword, but the others weren't sure about the weapons. Anyway, we tested it, and the kids immediately gave the characters swords and shields, so that helped us realise that conflict is expected and appreciated by the target audience.

Then as the theme went on, we just kept adding a little more tension here and there, which is nice because as the kids get older the more into tension they become and so those who started with Elves in year one get to grow with the theme.

Graham: That must be a challenging thing to think about, how children who are growing up with the theme receive it, whilst also trying to bring new kids in and balancing different age groups. You want all groups to be catered for.

Wes: You have to reset a theme every once in a while.

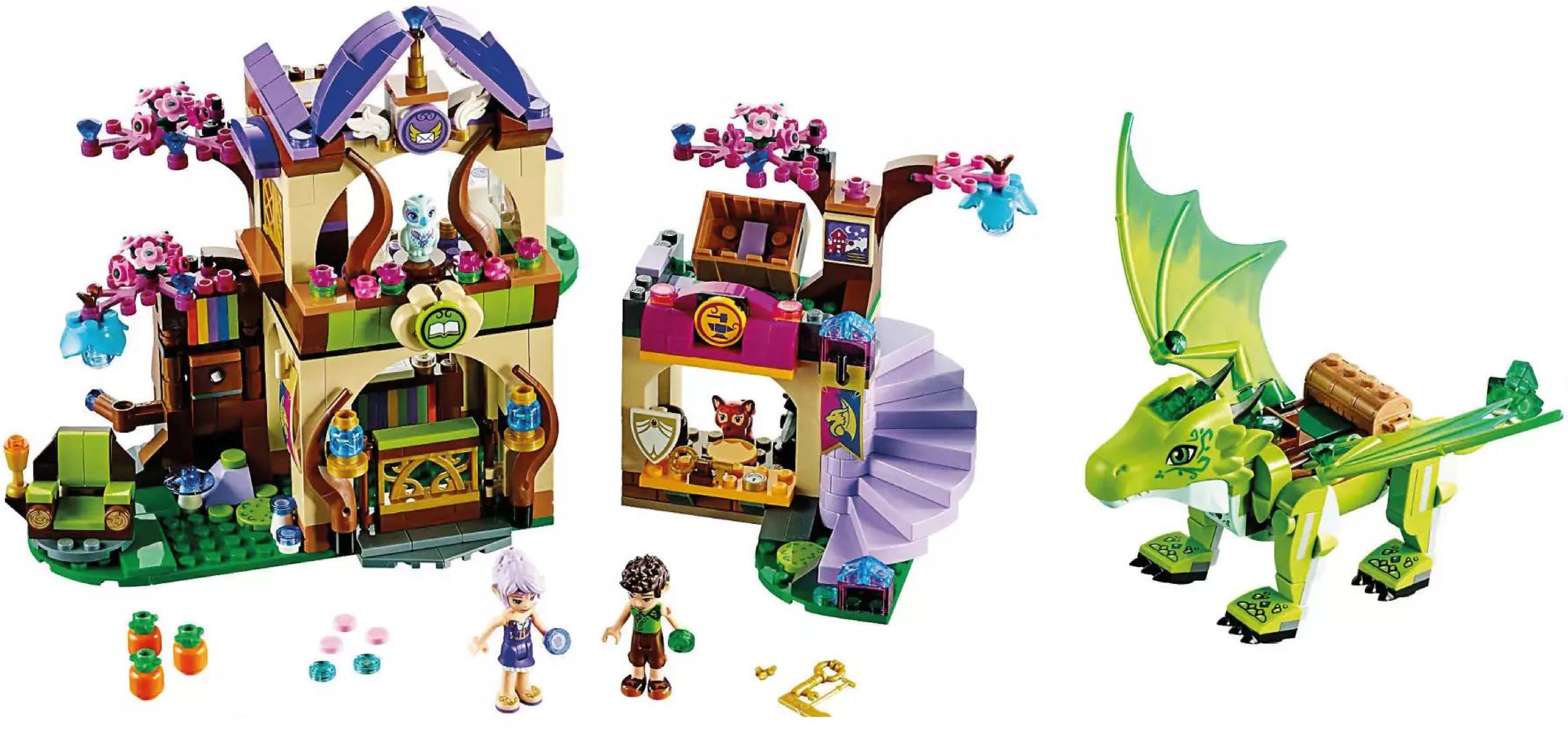
Graham: Moving away from Elves, you worked on 70838 Queen Watevra's 'So-Not-Evil' Space Palace for The LEGO Movie 2, but you also made a larger scale model for the movie too. How did that happen and which model did you work on first?

Wes: I started working on the big one first, actually. The LEGO Movie 2 was a really unique project, because everyone that was doing model design for products was also designing assets for the movie. It was kind of like a dual-purpose thing. I was brought in just to focus on that castle in all aspects, because of my experience on Elves.

We received a lot of concept art from the artists and the more we worked with them the more familiar they became with what was possible with LEGO bricks – at the beginning, for the movie model, I was thinking about how to make a physics-defying set that was big and could hang from the ceiling. It was inspired by solar system mobiles.

Graham: When you were designing it, were you told that the model was actually going into the movie's live action segment?

> "Everyone who was doing model design for products was also designing assets for the movie."



Left: 41176 The Secret Market Place included a dragon.

Top right: The product version of 70838 Queen Watevra's 'So-Not-Evil' Space Palace.

Bottom right: 41074 Azari and the Magical Bakery.

Wes: I didn't know if they were going to make a copy of it or if the plan was to ship it over, but in the end they had to ship it because it was too time intensive to build another. Our LEGOLAND models are designed in a way that any of our model maker groups could build them, with very clear layouts. Here, it was more like a MOC where you hadn't thought about instructions.

Plus, they always knew they were going to destroy it in the movie, it was only going to be in the movie for three seconds and there could only be one shot of it breaking. It was all a little bit stressful. [Laughs]

Graham: Very few people have their beautiful creation destroyed and filmed on that kind of budget!

When you were working on the play scale set, were you doing that alongside the movie prop or did you have to think about it afterwards?

Wes: Once we'd decided on the big one, it was about translating it into the playset and there we had a little more creative work to do on what we thought was right for the toy. It ended up quite different from the movie version, but the similar elements were there.

Graham: You also worked on 2018's 21315 Pop-Up Book – at the time, did Ideas just bring people in model by model as needed? What was the process of being selected to work on sets?

Wes: I think so, because they definitely didn't have a specific design team like they do now. Sam Johnson was the Creative Lead at the time and either he would do it or he would bring in someone who was interested in doing it. I was in a bit of a limbo phase and so worked on the book alongside 41379 Heartlake City Restaurant, a cute Italian restaurant for Friends.

Graham: With the book, was it tough getting the function to work in such a confined space? It looks so nice on display and it's hard to believe so much fits inside.

Wes: Fortunately, the fan designer had done a really good job already and I think another designer had already taken a stab at the conceptual phase. When I got to it, there were only a few parts different from Jason Allemann and Grant Davis' designs. It was more the beanstalk that was a challenge because the Little Red Riding Hood house was straightforward without too many changes, but when it was decided to add another story, I thought the verticality would be cool, which led to Jack and the Beanstalk. I've always been interested in functions and making mini Rube Goldberg machines when I was a kid, but I'm not a technical person. I'm not like [Senior Design Master]

Mike Psiaki, who knows the maths of why something is going to work; I just fiddle until I get lucky and fortunately it's easy to do that with LEGO bricks.

Graham: Sticking with the book theme, did you work on 10270 Bookshop as part of a limbo phase?

Wes: I was friends with Mike and I was around the Icons area a lot, so I'd come to him with questions or to give my unsolicited advice, which didn't go unappreciated, so I had this reputation of being a good outside sparring partner. [Icons Creative Lead] Jamie Berard came to me and said none of the team had capacity to develop the next modular and asked if I was interested – I'd mentioned I'd love to do one – and so I did the concept model and then was asked to take it through to completion.

Graham: At that point, was the plan for it to be a bookshop or was it open for you to do what you wanted?

Wes: I did a bit of exploration around the different things they hadn't done yet. I really wanted to push the smaller buildings – until then, [10218] Pet Shop was the only model when it was two buildings that split and I thought it was super cool. But it's tricky because it becomes more costly – you need to have a double wall in the middle – plus there's the modularity of the apartment building as, ideally, you'd be able to buy multiples and stack them, but that would mean another front door. We ended up with a good solution with the door with the windows in it, you could take the fence from the back and put it in front of the door so it felt like a balcony.

But we also definitely floated around a few ideas with the bookshop. I actually designed the building so it could be any business, but then once we thought of a bookshop we kept going with it. There was a lot of talk about what we should name it – everyone shortens modular names to two letters, so the set couldn't be called 'Birch Books' because it would have been the same as [10251] Brick Bank.

Graham: With that model, what's the thing that you're happiest about?

Wes: The overall colour palette – I'm a big fan of bright colours and that's why I like working on Friends. The modulars have historically had quite muted, realistic colours. There's the yellow tree, the red roof and the blue building, so it's all the primary colours, but they're also more tertiary colours, so it's a warm yellow and teal for the building, which makes it feel a little more sophisticated.

Graham: VIDIYO is one of the more unusual themes you have been involved with. When did you start on that?

Wes: Not at the very beginning, but early on. It had been concepted by the Creative Play Lab for a couple of years. I came off Harry Potter onto it. It was interesting because I think they wanted me for my illustration background, to work on the AR [augmented reality] backgrounds and a lot of concepting. The fact I could do both model design and concepting is one of the reasons they wanted me on that one.

Graham: Were you working on the music genres and characters?

Wes: That was mostly credit to Ross Haynes – he would make all these mood boards and create these different aesthetics and then come up with fun, punny names like Monster Metal. He also helped define the Elves theme. He was the Creative Lead and we had an Experience Lead because it was a very different kind of project; it was mostly him and Jordan Scott running it as associates. They worked really well together and it was fun to do, with all of the minifigure designs and different themes. Then Joe Coleman, who was the element designer, and I worked together – it was a fun collaboration and an overall highly cross-disciplinary project.

Wes Talbott

***Top left:** 43230 Walt Disney Tribute Camera includes a mini multiplane camera.*

***Top centre:** 21348 Dungeons & Dragons: Red Dragon's Tale was a collaborative project.*

***Top right:** Recently, Wes has been working on Botanicals sets like 10345 Flower Arrangement.*

***Left:** Wes contributed a page to the Modular Buildings Collection with 10270 Bookshop.*

> "We wanted it to feel like a D&D party had put thought into the set."

Graham: Let's talk about 43230 Walt Disney Tribute Camera, which released in 2023. When were you brought in to work on that model and what was the brief for it?

Wes: The brief was pretty loose – they wanted a $100 model aimed at adults that celebrated 100 years of Disney.

Part of the brief was having a selection of novel minifigures. We explored a lot of different ideas with it – my first idea was it being a brick-built object, which we see a lot of desire for, and I'd worked on [21327 Typewriter]. But those never felt Disney enough, it was just a cool vintage machine that didn't celebrate the brand. It wasn't until we landed upon the idea of the film strip that we then went super Disney, plus the film canisters looking like Mickey ears. Yes, 2D animation doesn't use that particular type of camera, but Walt Disney used that type in all his other movies, so it was a celebration of his process.

Graham: Was it fun figuring out how to do the multiplane camera with all of the printed transparent pieces?

Wes: That was one where we weren't sure if we were going to include it at first – and not everyone was convinced. But I made a little mock up, which you could look in and have the parallaxing effect, then once it was a little more polished I showed it to some people who were super Disney nerds and they loved it. It also helps that the clapper board gives a nice base for the minifigures, so you can have both the bigger display model and the more desk-scale module that you can break off. I really like when you do that with models and you can decide where and how you want to display parts.

Graham: Moving through beloved fan franchises, let's talk about Dungeons and Dragons, and your involvement in 21348 Dungeons & Dragons: Red Dragon's Tale. How did you get roped into that?

Wes: I've had a few really good years at the LEGO Group – I've completely annihilated my bucket list, starting with [10316 The Lord of the Rings: Rivendell]. With D&D, it started when Jordan Scott became the Creative Lead for Ideas. He's a massive D&D fan and I've played multiple campaigns with him as DM [Dungeon Master]; we wanted it to feel like a D&D party had put thought into the set and have multiple people working on it. [Senior Model Designer] Mark Stafford is also a huge D&D fan; it was making sure that people had capacity and were really interested. I'm a huge fan of dragons, I had worked on the dragons for Elves and Harry Potter [76406 Hungarian Horntail Dragon], so I asked to do the dragon for this model.

I started with the dragon and the Beholder, but we had sketches of lots of different things. We would take bits and pieces of the things we were working on and bring them together – the Owlbear was a collaborative thing that we all worked on. There was another designer who was going to help out, but when they left I worked a bit on the building too. Mark was the driving designer, so we would work on stuff and then he would take it over at a certain point and finalise the design.

Graham: Working on the dragon, did you have to go back and forth with Mark on scale to ensure the two had a nice composition together? Part of why that set works so well is because the dragon is just the perfect scale with the building.

Wes: We mostly started with the scale of the dragon based on a minifigure. We found an official D&D chart that shows how big an adult dragon is next to a human, so that was our starting point. We also worked out that it was a little bit smaller than the submission [the set started with a LEGO Ideas fan submission] because we needed a more stable way of connecting it to the tower. We did design the tower after we'd figured out the dragon – having the tower in ruins helped because it would be trickier to mount a dragon on a pristine tower.

Graham: As part of the January 2025 wave, you worked on three Botanical sets, 10343 Mini Orchid, 10344 Lucky Bamboo and 10345 Flower Arrangement, which look completely different to everything else in your portfolio.

Wes: The Botanicals team have a backlog of designs they've concepted over the years and so I started with that library. I'm trying to think if my sets ended up being new, I'm not sure, but even just having those designs as placeholders to mess around with was useful. I started with the bamboo and I was familiar with the two Theo [Bonner] did the year before [10368 Chrysanthemum and 10369 Plum Blossom].

The bamboo was tricky because it's so straightforward, it's just cylinders, and I know people said it was a little boring, but we did try other things. With lucky bamboo, it spirals around, and we tried using the macaroni piece – we call them the brickaroni – to make the spiral effect, but the stability wasn't good enough, it was too fragile. We found it to be a bit polarising – some want something subtle and others want something with more colour.

When I was working on Flower Arrangement, we wanted to explore the idea of doing something bigger, and something with a more creative aspect in the form of the vessel. For that, I had to learn how to be a florist; fortunately, my aunt is one and my mum helps her a lot – she constantly sends me photos of what they've been working on, so I had a little experience of that work, which helped a bit.

Graham: Looking back at what you've worked on so far, do you have any advice for someone who dreams of working for the LEGO Group?

Wes: I think one thing that is surprising is that not everyone that applies for a job has a lot of LEGO building in their portfolio – it isn't always needed. We hire people with a design education, who have maybe studied industrial design and things like that. Having exposure to and knowledge of the bricks really helps, of course.

I think it also depends on who we're hiring – we hire a lot more concept designers these days, where it's about coming up with cool ideas. For that you need sketching skills and where fundamental design skills are key. But then there are roles working more downstream on model design and thinking of it as a product.

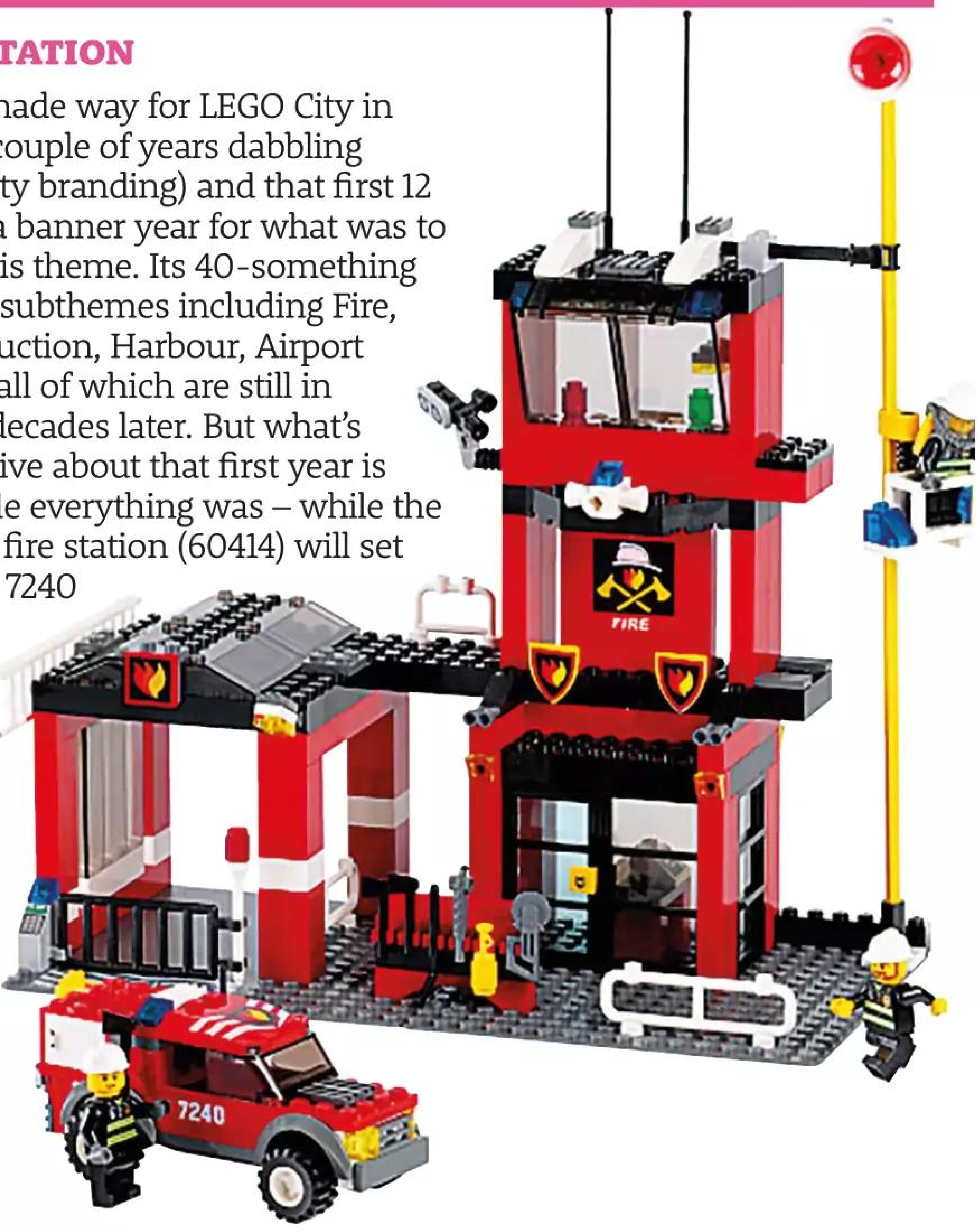
More generally, working for the LEGO Group is about having a collaborative attitude. If you haven't worked with other people in team projects where you communicate your ideas to others or take input or take criticism, then it's going to be tough. We need people that can work well with others.

2005

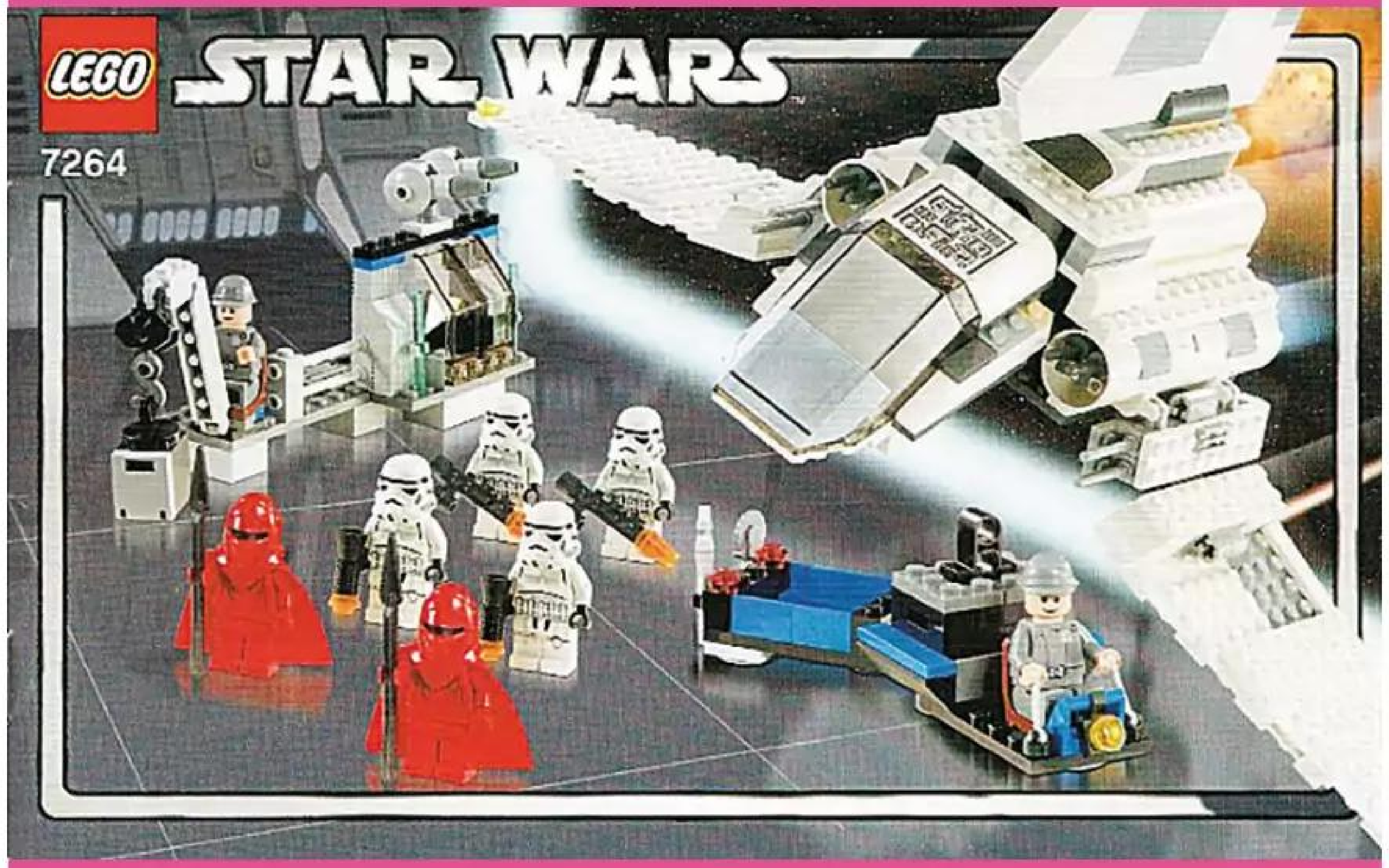
FOR UNDER £20 YOU COULD BUY...

7240 FIRE STATION

LEGO Town made way for LEGO City in 2005 (after a couple of years dabbling with World City branding) and that first 12 months was a banner year for what was to come from this theme. Its 40-something sets spanned subthemes including Fire, Police, Construction, Harbour, Airport and Medical, all of which are still in rotation two decades later. But what's most impressive about that first year is how affordable everything was – while the current LEGO fire station (60414) will set you back £70, 7240 Fire Station retailed for just £20. And it's tough to say there's much between them from a play perspective...



FOR UNDER £50 YOU COULD BUY...



7264 IMPERIAL INSPECTION

All eyes were on the bumper Revenge of the Sith collection for LEGO Star Wars in 2005, but the best playset of the year was arguably 7264 Imperial Inspection. Recreating the opening sequence from Return of the Jedi, this Imperial Shuttle also manages to squeeze a cargo transport, crane and Imperial workstation into its 367 pieces – along with an incredible 10 minifigures, seven of which have still never been seen anywhere else. Those include the first-ever Stormtroopers with printed legs, a unique Emperor Palpatine variant and a couple of Imperial Officers. You'll never find 10 minifigures in a Star Wars set for less than £50 today.

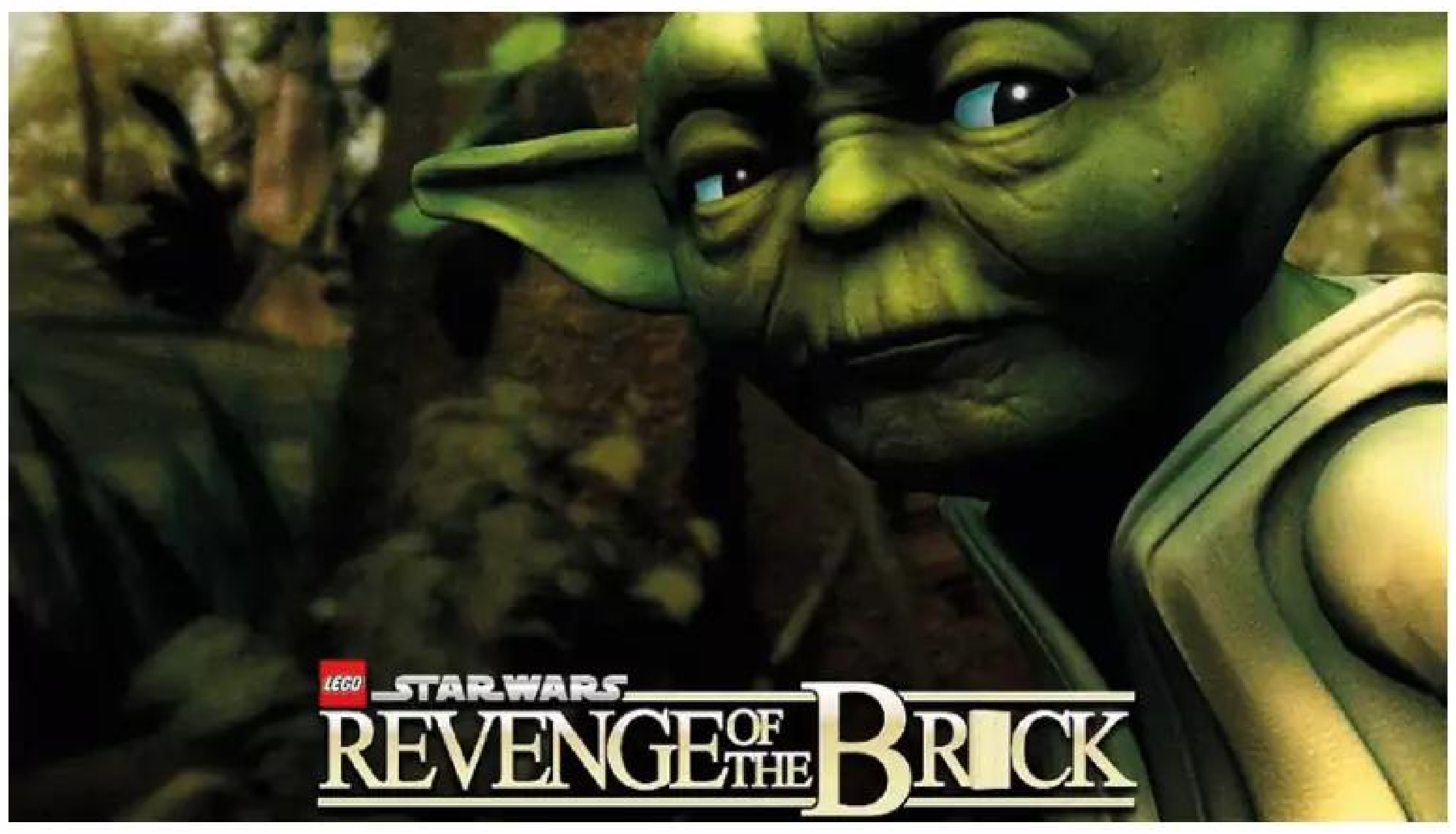
FOR UNDER £100 YOU COULD BUY...

8653 ENZO FERRARI 1:10

LEGO Ferrari fans had two different Enzos to choose from in 2005 – a smaller, 477-piece System set at 1:17 scale and this beast of a Technic set at 1:10 scale. The System set looks pretty primitive by today's standards, but 8653 still holds its own 20 years later, capturing every curve and panel of the 2002 car with a level of finesse you wouldn't necessarily expect of the era. While a modern take on this car would probably close up a few more of the gaps and incorporate a few more functions, the original is still shelf-worthy – if you can find it for a decent price.

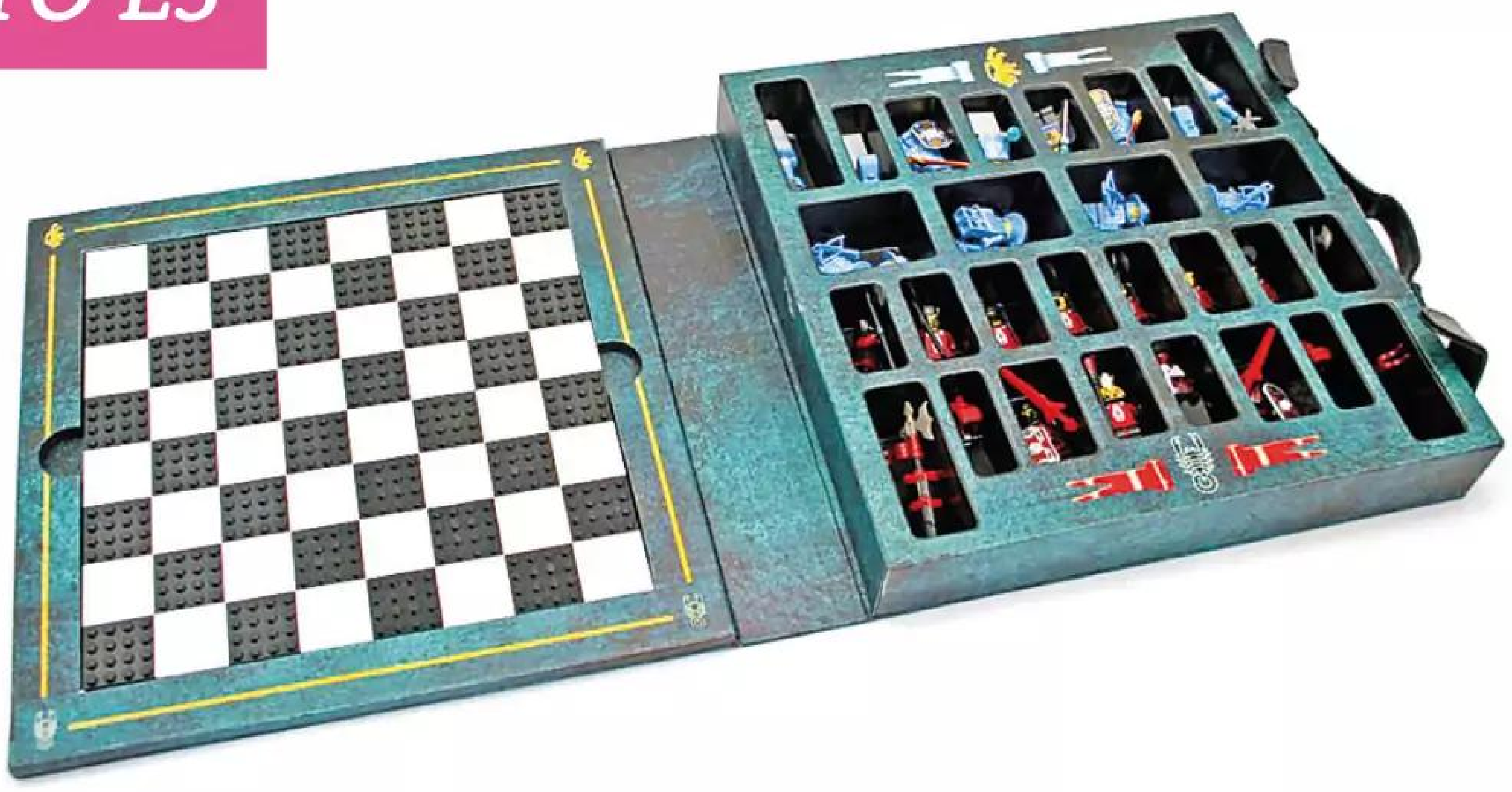
LEGO
RACERS
10+
8653
Ferrari
Enzo Ferrari
ENZO FERRARI 1:10

THE BRICK STRIKES BACK



The Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith hype extended not only to the LEGO sets and TT Games' first LEGO video game in 2005, but also to a curious short film titled Revenge of the Brick. Treehouse Animation and none other than Mark Hamill collaborated on this five-minute movie, which spoofs Episode III's Coruscant and Kashyyyk battles before ending in a cantina not unlike the one in Mos Eisley. As a promotional piece it's pretty good and leans into the source material well – Obi-Wan's starfighter disassembles and reassembles to avoid missiles, for example – but the less said about the hyper-detailed minifigure faces, the better.

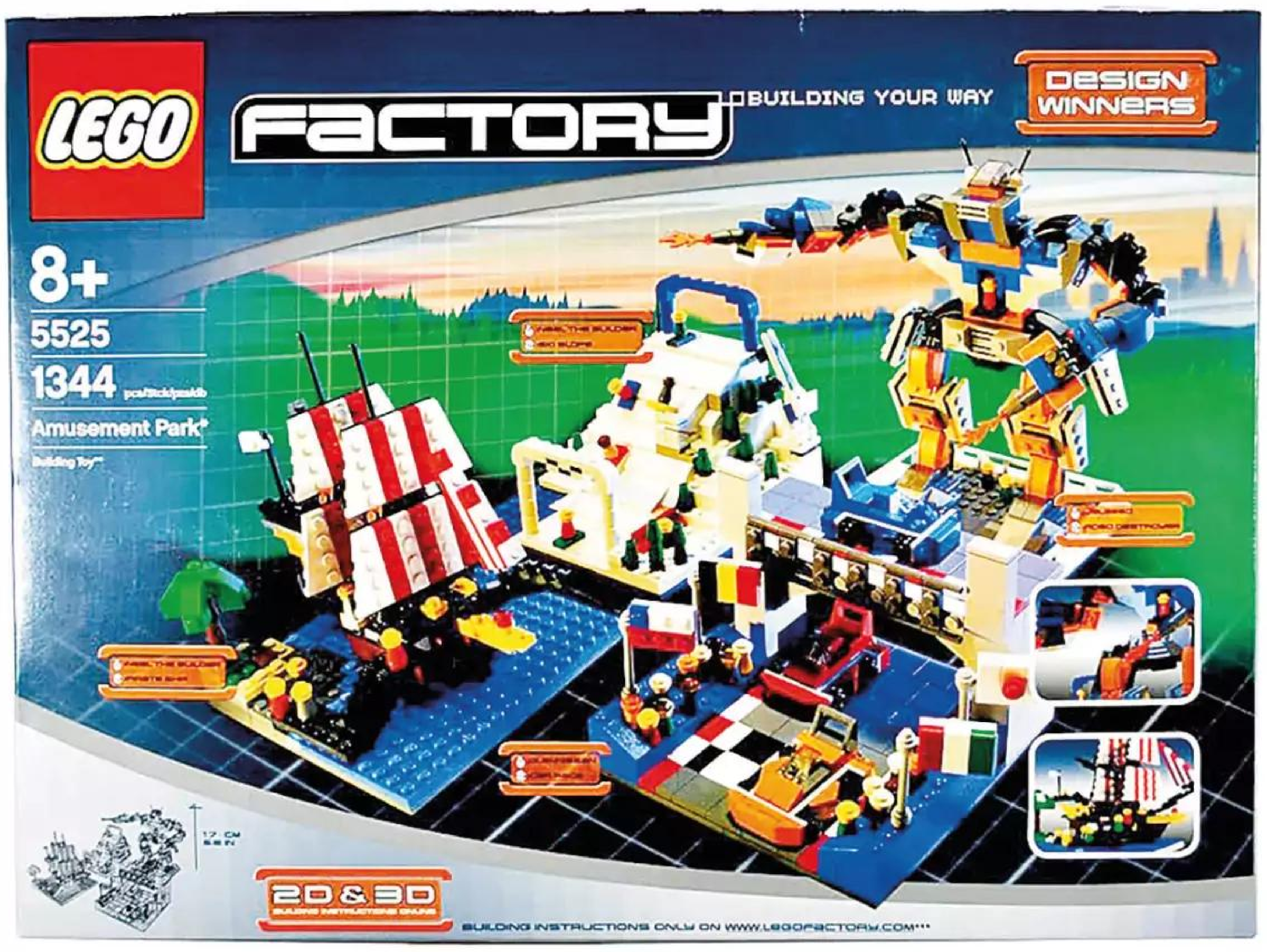
KNIGHT TO E5



It feels like the LEGO Group always has a chess set in rotation, so you might be surprised to learn that its very first take on the classic board game debuted as late as 2005. But where modern chess sets have you building the pieces and board from scratch, the original Knights' Kingdom Chess Set placed the focus entirely on its two warring factions of minifigure pawns, bishops, kings and queens (with brick-built knights and rooks), all situated atop a giant prefab board. The carry case was pretty neat at least – and for £30, this was a great way to stock up on Knights' Kingdom minifigures.

DESIGN YOUR OWN SET

Before LEGO Ideas, there was LEGO Factory. Introduced in 2005 with three sample sets dreamt up by the LEGO Group, this initiative called on fans to use LEGO Digital Designer to come up with their own models that could then be purchased by other fans, complete with custom packaging. But just as Ideas today leads to mass-produced sets based on crowdsourced suggestions, so too did a handful of fan-designed LEGO Factory models end up being produced as official sets available exclusively through LEGO.com in the late 2000s. Like most of the LEGO Group's wider initiatives, fan-designed sets didn't come about overnight – but it's interesting to chart the progression from Factory to Ideas.



Meanwhile, outside the LEGO bubble...

HIGHEST GROSSING MOVIE
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

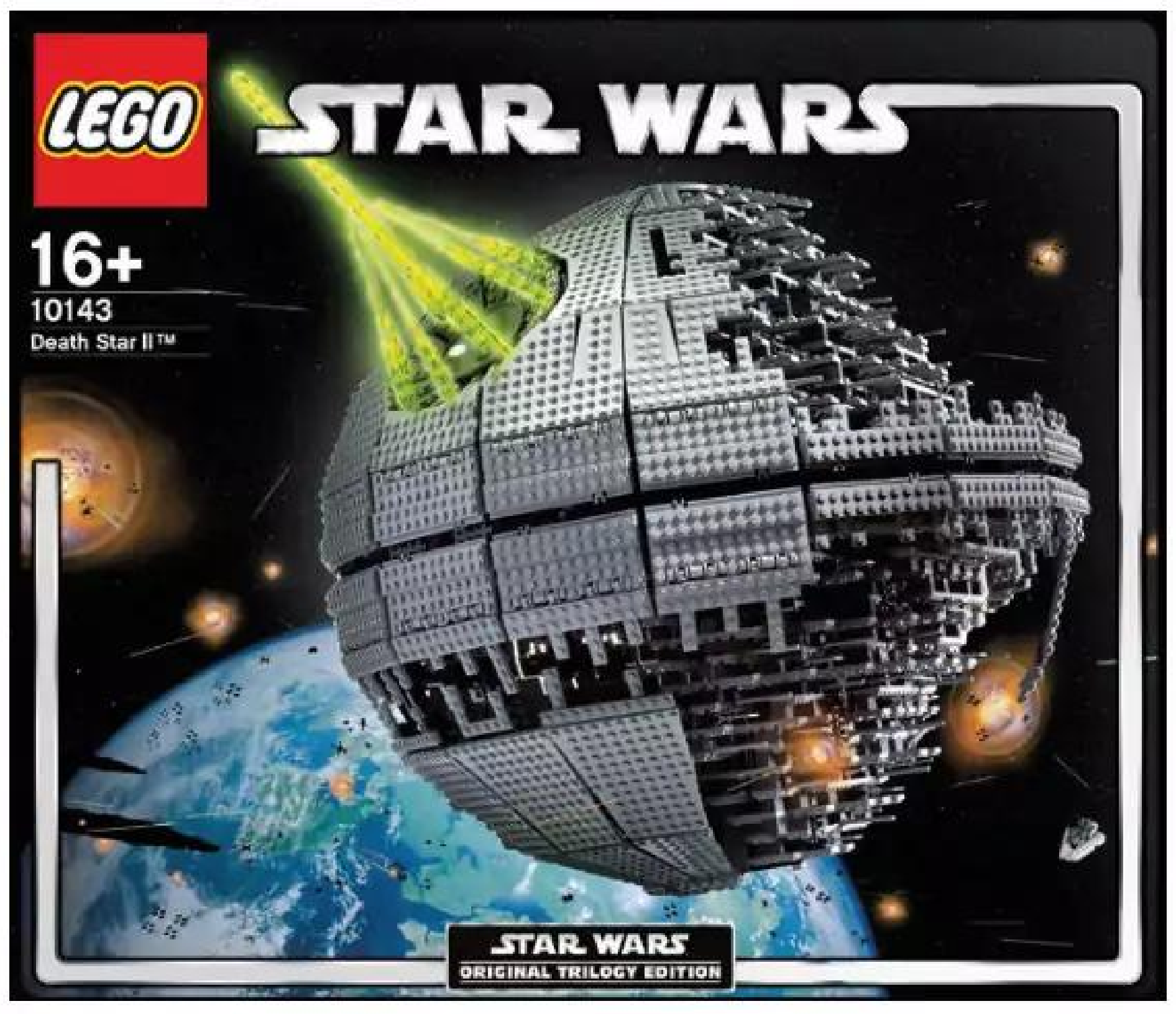
BEST SELLING ALBUM
ALL THE RIGHT REASONS (NICKELBACK)

BEST SELLING GAME
GRAN TURISMO 4

BEST SELLING BOOK
HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

NFL SUPER BOWL WINNING TEAM
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Biggest Set



10143 Death Star II (3,449 pieces)

146

SETS RELEASED

Classic Catalogue

Time Cruising

Travelling back through the years to look at some of the most memorable LEGO items

ANIMATION

1989
THE MAGIC PORTAL

Thought you'd picked up on every reference in 2014's The LEGO Movie? Here's one you might have missed – the side of the tube Finn uses to send Emmet back into the LEGO world is inscribed with 'magic portal', which is a nod to Lindsay Fleay's 1989 brickfilm The Magic Portal.

Crude as it looks today, it's quite incredible considering it is from a time before digital editing tools.

Written, produced, directed by and starring Fleay, the 16-minute short was created over the course of four years with the backing of the Australian Film Commission. It tells the story of a LEGO astronaut who journeys into the real world through a mysterious portal. Sound familiar?

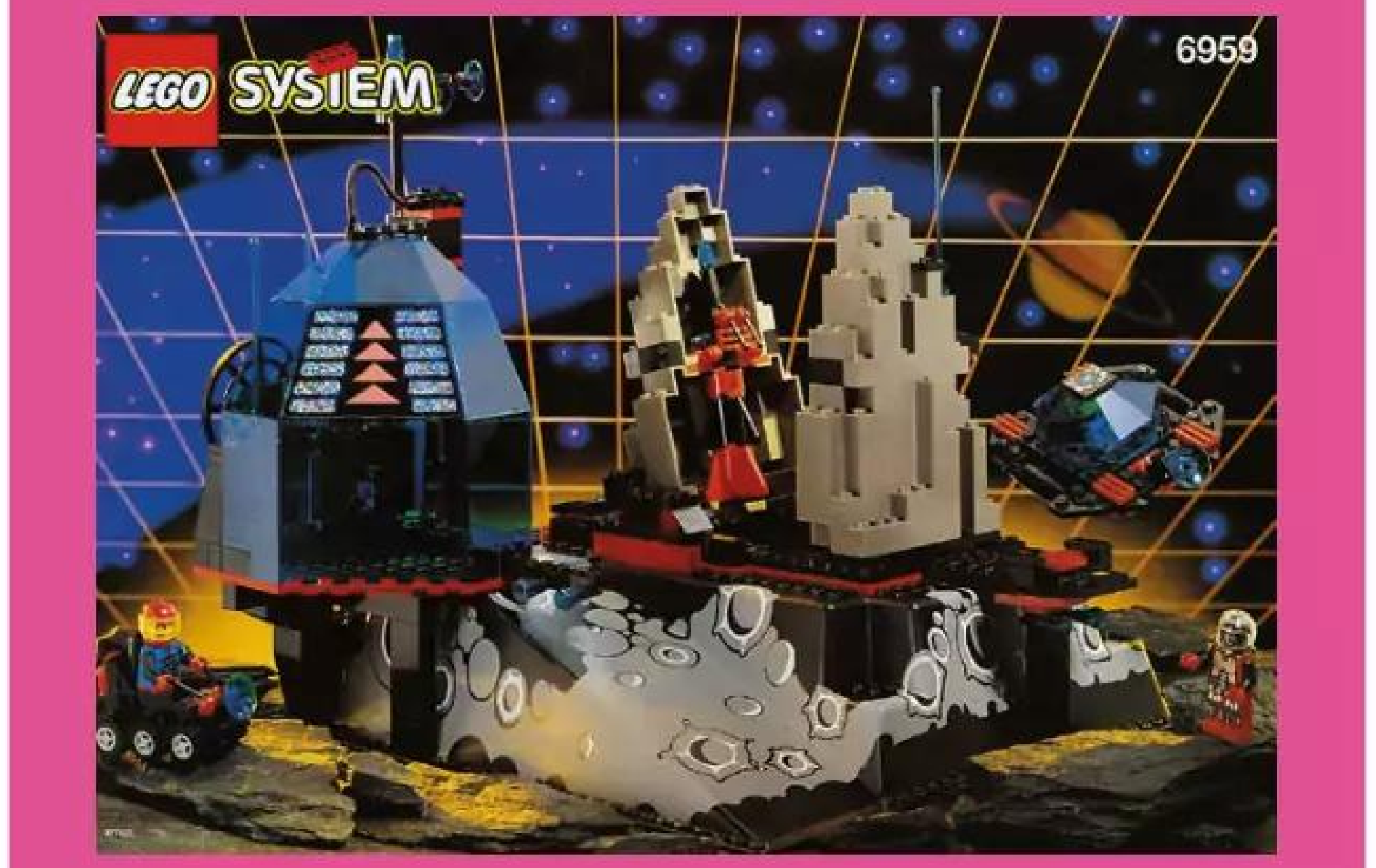
When the movie was complete, Fleay sent it to the LEGO Group for consideration ahead of submitting it to major film festivals and competitions. And just as it had with Henrik and Lars Hassing's Journey to the Moon in 1973, the company responded positively to the brickfilm – but before long, had a change of heart and issued Fleay with a cease-and-desist letter, demanding the filmmaker send all copies to the LEGO Group within a week.

Fleay didn't give in and eventually the LEGO Group backed off from pursuing legal action, but by that point the damage was done and it was too late for him to enact his plans to submit the movie to festivals and competitions.

In a strange twist of fate, Fleay eventually went on to work for Animal Logic, the animation studio behind The LEGO Movie – and while he left the company before Phil Lord and Chris Miller began pushing virtual bricks together, his legacy was cemented in 2014 not only through the blockbuster's overt reference to The Magic Portal, but also through its influence on The LEGO Movie's storyline.

THEME

1994
SPYRIUS



Not content with letting Blacktron have all the fun as resident bad guys in Space, the LEGO Group cooked up the subtly-named Spyrius faction in 1994. This band of spies – whose astronauts were known as Spyrians – schemed and conspired to steal and acquire technology from rival factions, which they would then take back to their home planet (also called Spyrius) and guard with giant robots.

Further adding to the mysterious intentions of this band of rogues was the predominantly black and red colour scheme for its ships, robots and base, the latter of which was Spyrius's biggest set by dimensions if not piece count. 6959 Lunar Launch Site (known in some territories by the much cooler name Spyrius Station Xenolith 6) made use of giant prefab elements, including a raised baseplate, massive rock parts and a quarter dome, to offer an incredible amount of play across just 287 pieces – as was typical for Space bases back then.

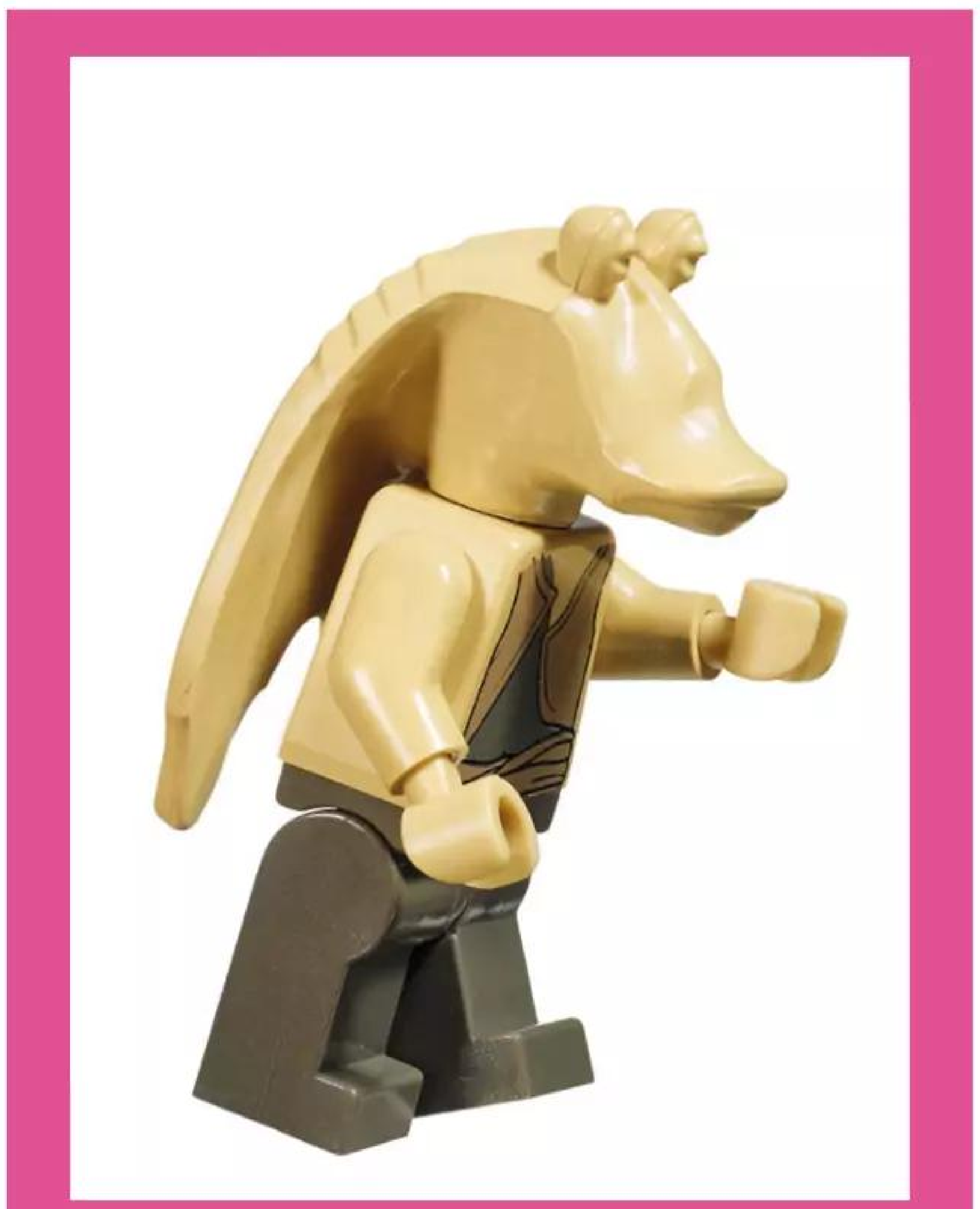
The colour scheme of this one was ultimately what set it apart though – and that extended too to its biggest set by piece count, the intimidatingly impressive 6949 Robo-Guardian. This looming lump of red and black bricks has a certain Dennis the Menace air to it (colour blocking would improve in the years and decades to come), but also leans into the modular nature of other Space sets at the time, with a detachable head and arms that can together form a flying spacecraft.

It might not seem surprising now, but it was unusual for suck a dark theme to grace shelves in the 1990s.

Like several other Space subthemes, Spyrius didn't hang around for very long – all but one of its six sets debuted in 1994, with only the tiny 23-piece 1954 Surveillance Scooter cleaning up after the rest in 1995 – but this is easily one of the veteran theme's hidden gems.

MINIFIGURE

1999
JAR JAR BINKS



'Meesa your humble LEGO minifigure.' Love him or loathe him, Jar Jar Binks is one of the LEGO Star Wars O.G.s, debuting on shelves in 1999 as part of that initial wave of sets for The Phantom Menace. Just as he pioneered computer-generated characters on the silver screen, so too did this hapless Gungan pave the way for decades of dedicated minifigure moulds.

That's because Jar Jar was the first LEGO minifigure to receive a custom moulded head, a decision that even the staunchest LEGO purists would have been hard-pressed to disagree with at the time (just try to imagine Jar Jar with a regular LEGO minifigure head). Printing such a piece was still beyond the LEGO Group at that point, however, so all of the detail had to be communicated in the intricate shaping of the mould alone.

He appeared in three sets in 1999 and another two in 2000, so the LEGO Group made the most of the new part.

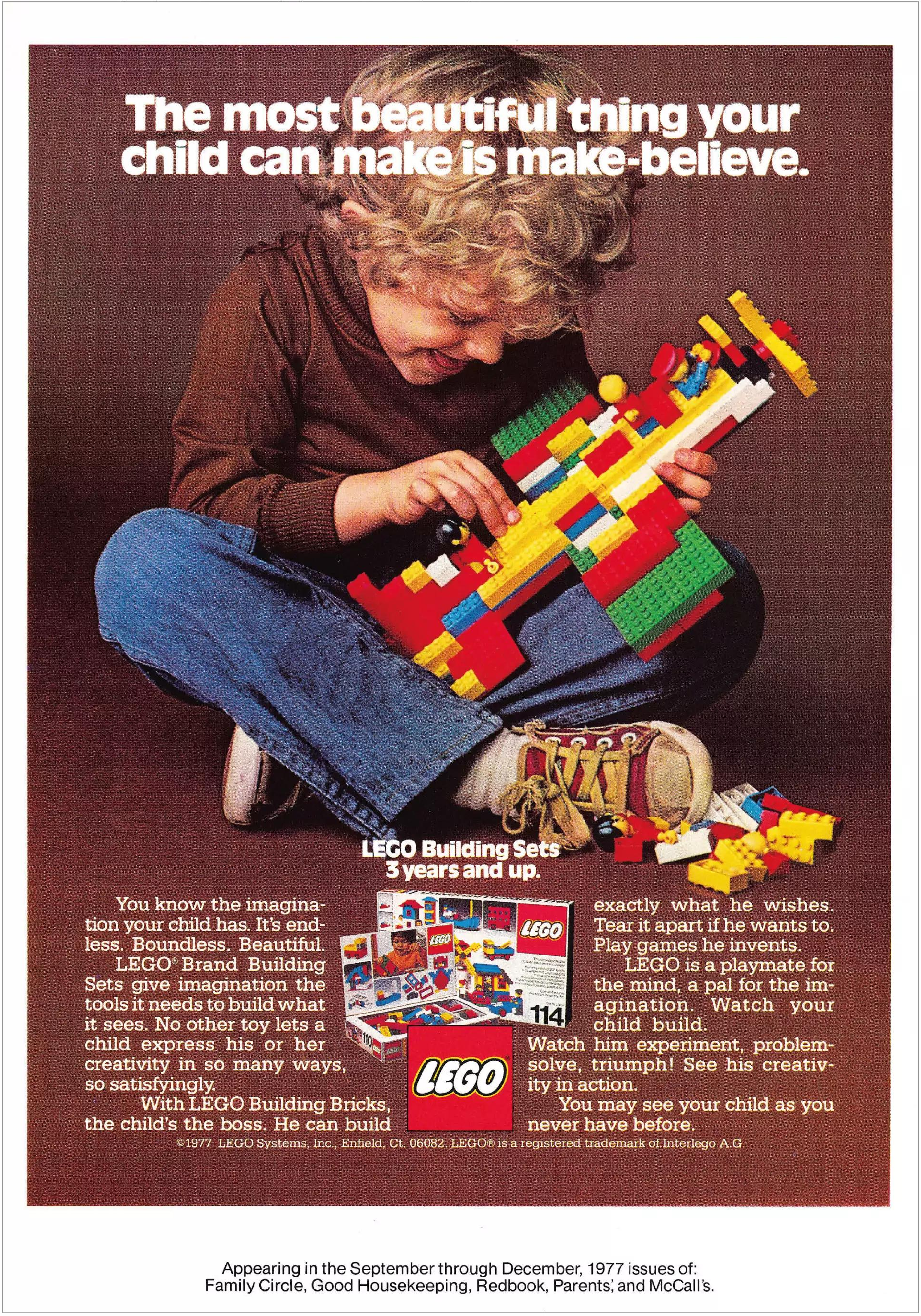
It's fair to say it was successful, not least because that original Jar Jar mould has very much inspired the modern decorated version, which most recently appeared in last year's 75389 The Dark Falcon. You can barely see the differences in the sculpt.

The LEGO Group wasted no time building on that success, following up with specialist pieces for C-3PO and Chewbacca in 2000 – and countless LEGO Star Wars characters in the 26 years since.

Turns out we have a lot to thank Jar Jar for after all...

CHRIS WHARFE

This 1977 advertisement is from a famous series that encouraged parents to see the creative potential of LEGO bricks.


The most beautiful thing your child can make is make-believe.
LEGO Building Sets 3 years and up.
LEGO
114
110

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You may see your child as you never have before.

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Appearing in the September through December, 1977 issues of:
Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, Parents,' and McCall's.

7298 **Theme:** Dino 2010 / Dino Attack / **Year:** 2005 / **Average selling price new:** £151 / **Average selling price used:** £76 / **Recommended age:** 8-14 / **Pieces:** 711 / **Minifigures:** 4

Dino Air Tracker

Jump in this helicopter and head to the sky to hunt down mutant dinosaurs

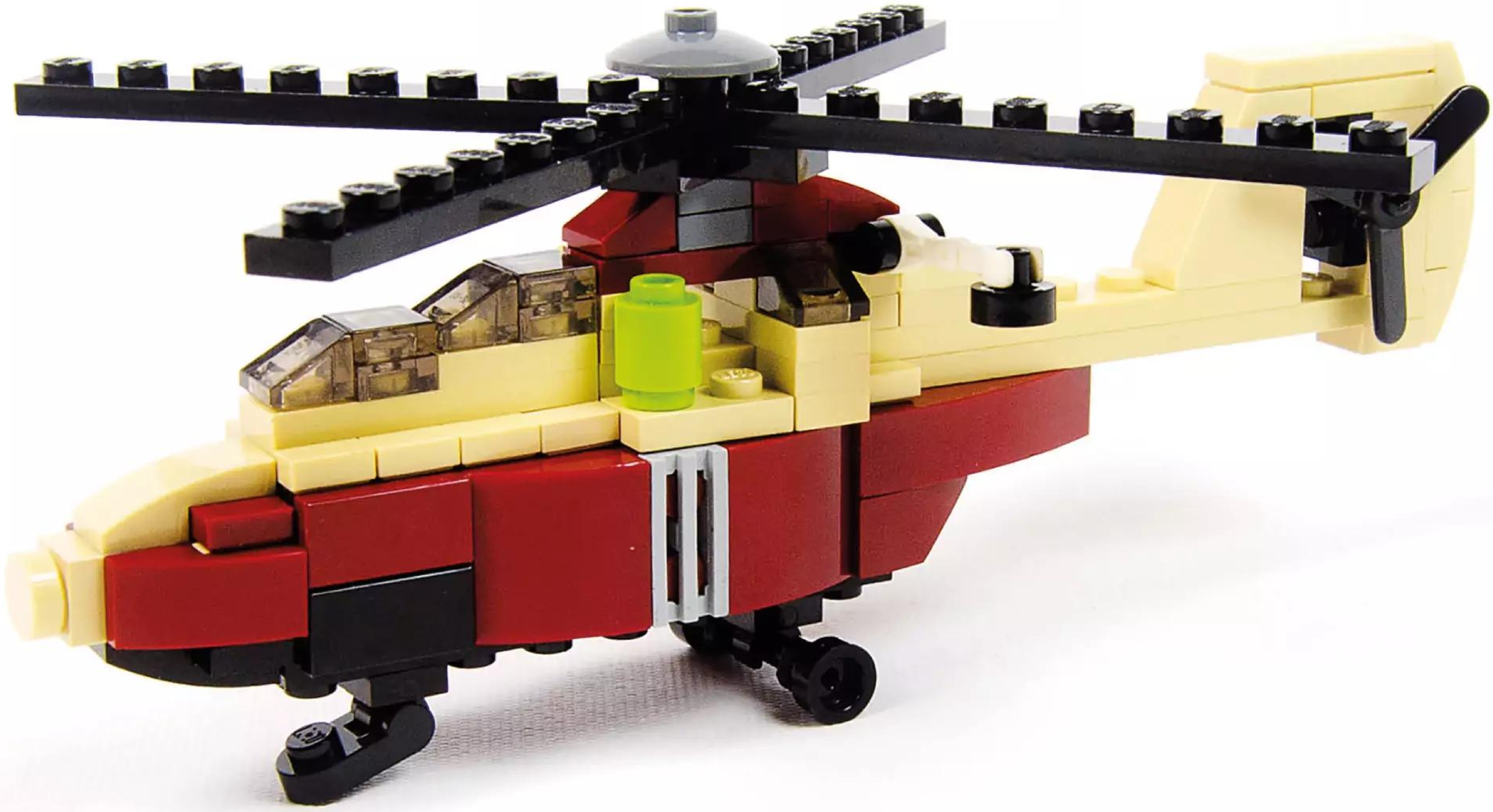
Two decades before Gareth Edwards sent dinosaur hunters to encounter mutant creatures in Jurassic World Rebirth, the LEGO Group did the same in the surprisingly gritty Dino Attack, also known as Dino 2010.

During a tumultuous time for the LEGO Group, it was born of desperation and experimentation. The result was a group of sets far darker, more violent and larger than anything released before or after. To this day, 7298 Dino Air Tracker (also known as 7477 T-1 Typhoon vs. T-Rex) still boasts the largest LEGO System helicopter. The model has two cockpits, plus a tactical and storage area topped by 32 stud long rotors.

Dino 2010 sets had a striking colour scheme. They were one of the early themes to adopt dark red in a major way, pairing it with tan and black to give models an edgier look. Capturing those colours and the chopper's proportions was key to getting this mini version of the build right. The scale of the body and rotors was important too.

The colossal mutant T. rex that comes in the set completes the story. Its menacing red underbelly and glowing red eyes make it a ferocious looking beast and pairing a brick-built version with this build would look fantastic. Alternatively, this helicopter is probably the appropriate scale for the dinosaur in 2025's 76974 Brick-Built Mosasaurus Boat Mission.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



Get the parts list: blocksmag.com/goto/dino-air-tracker

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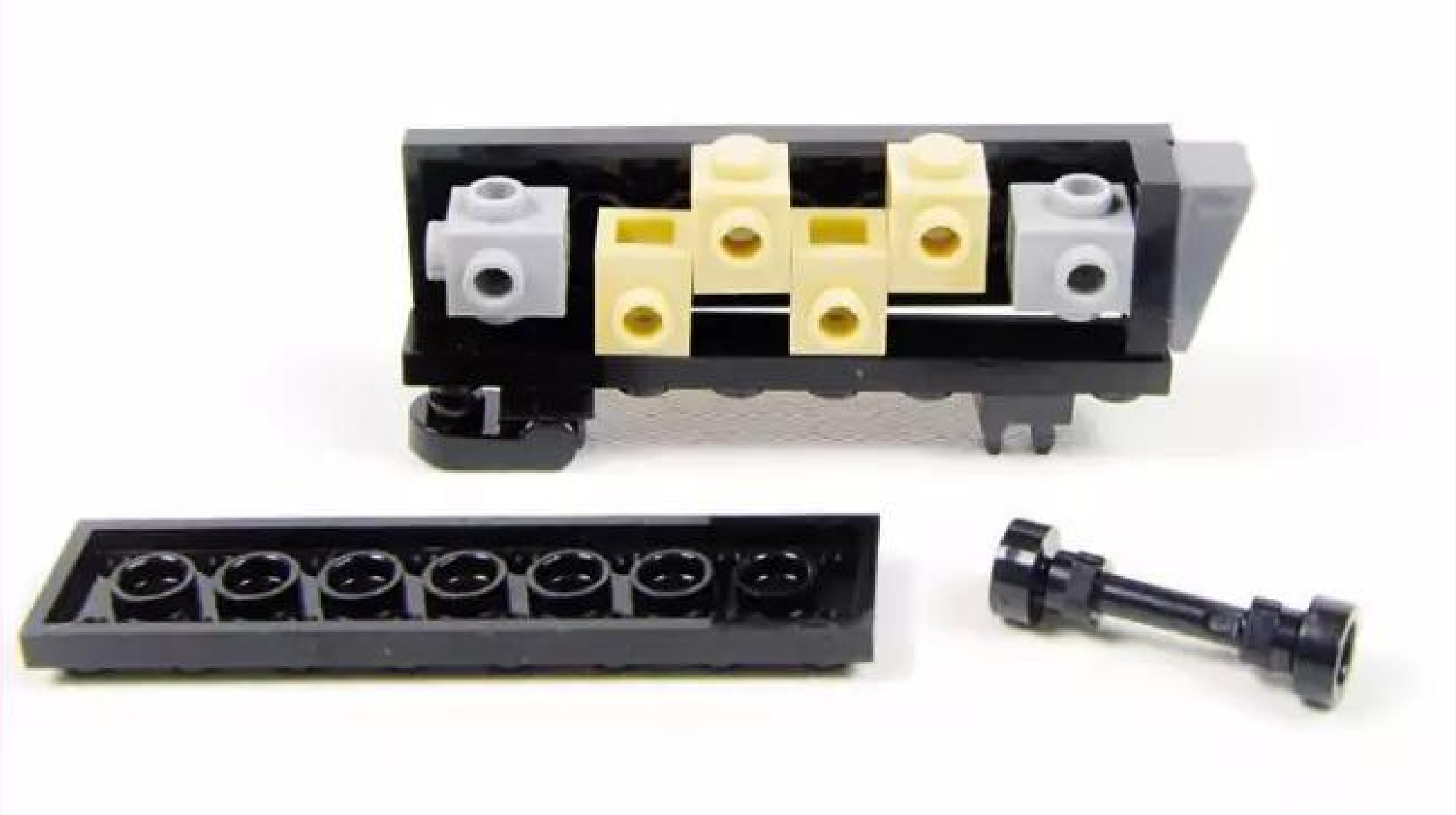

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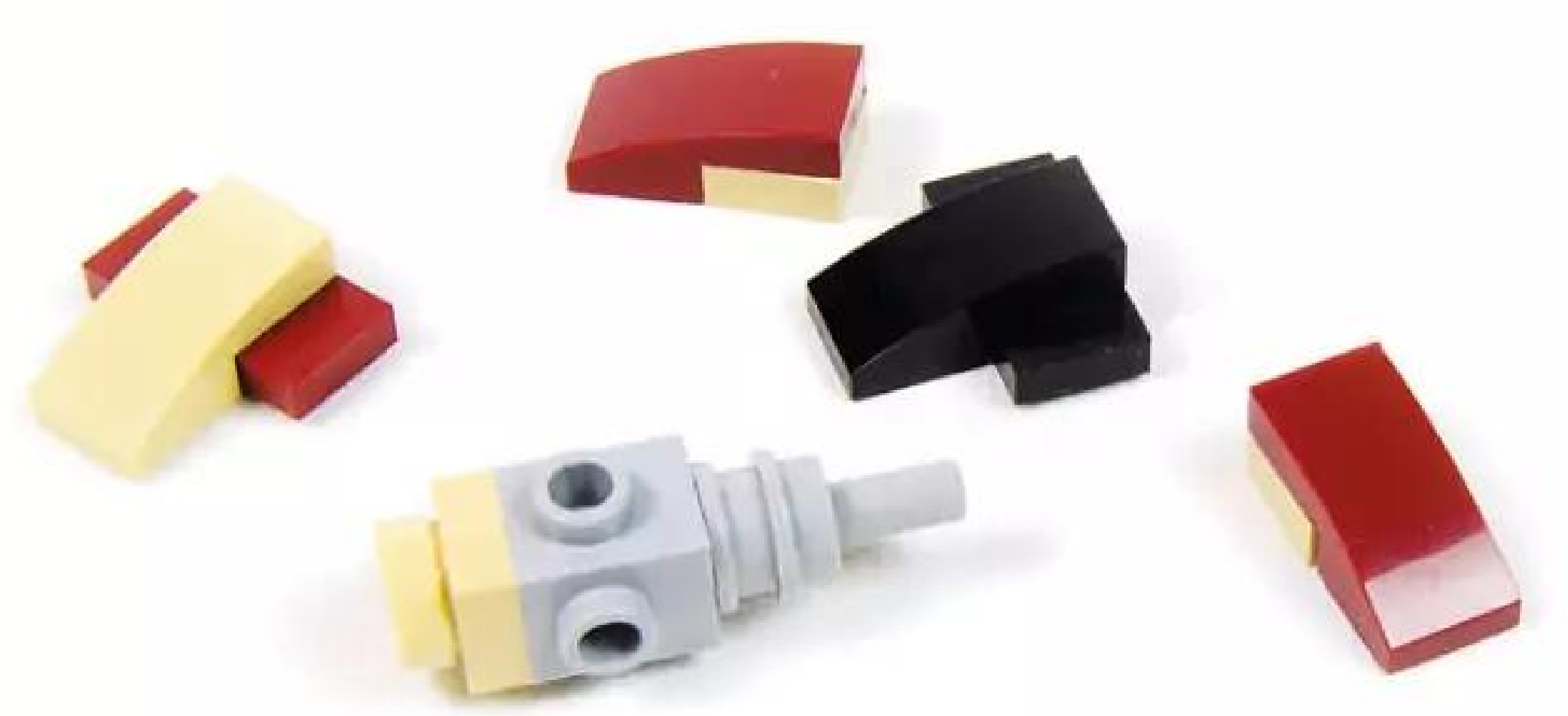

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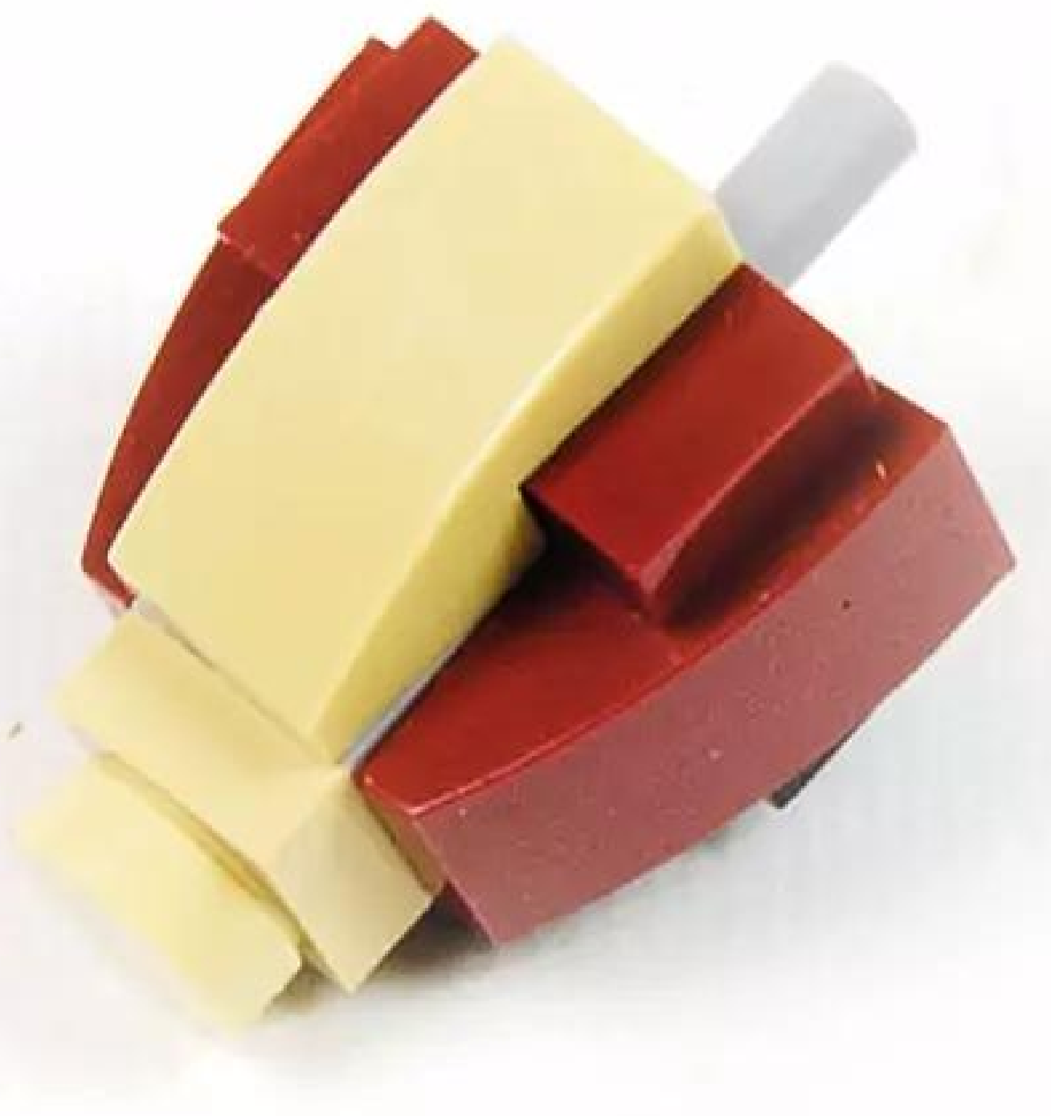

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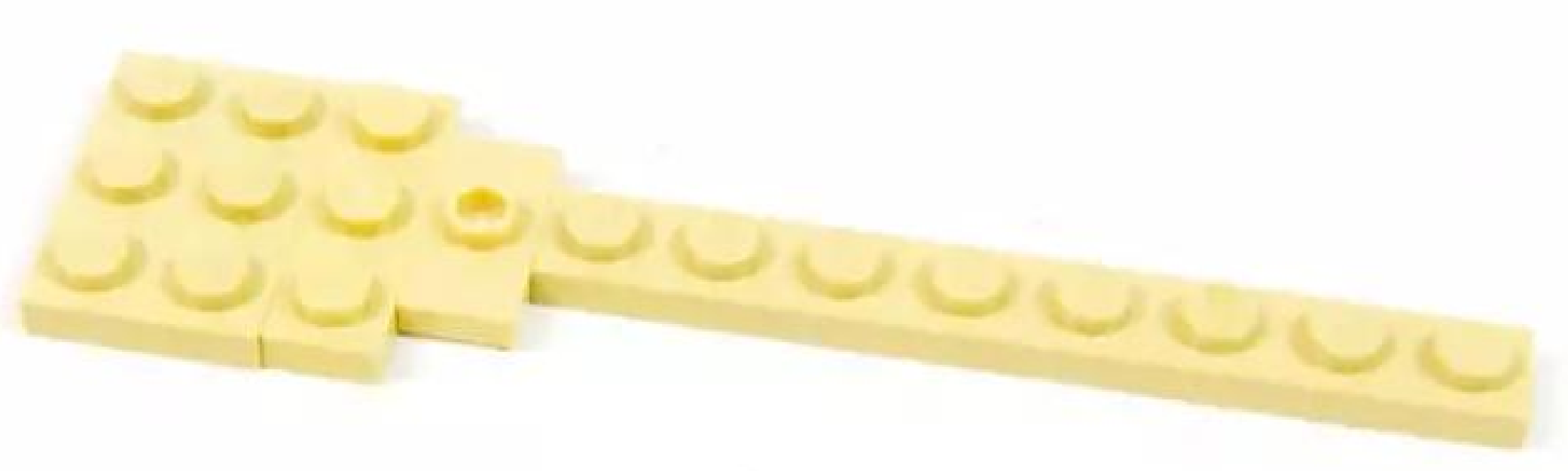

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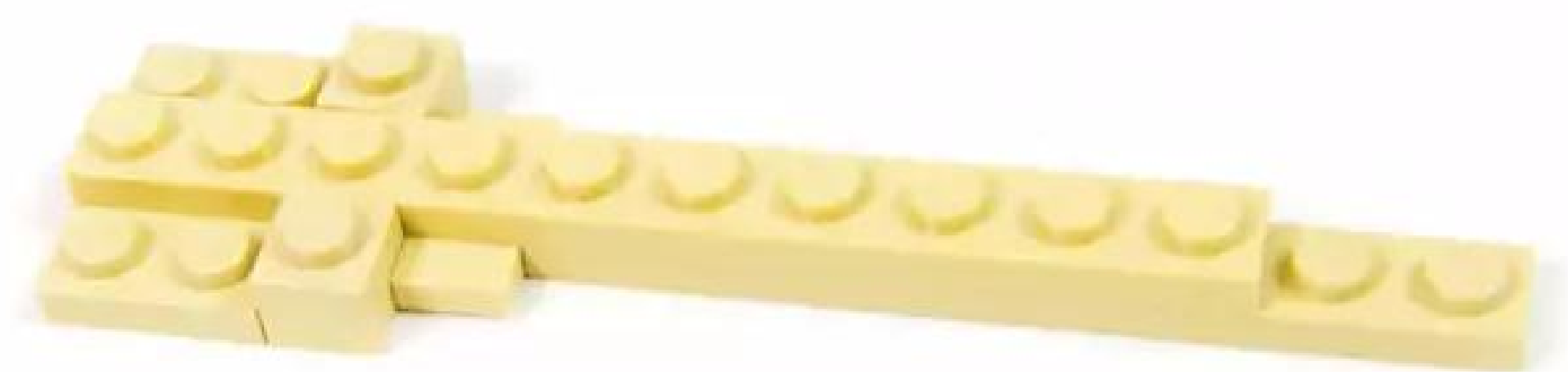

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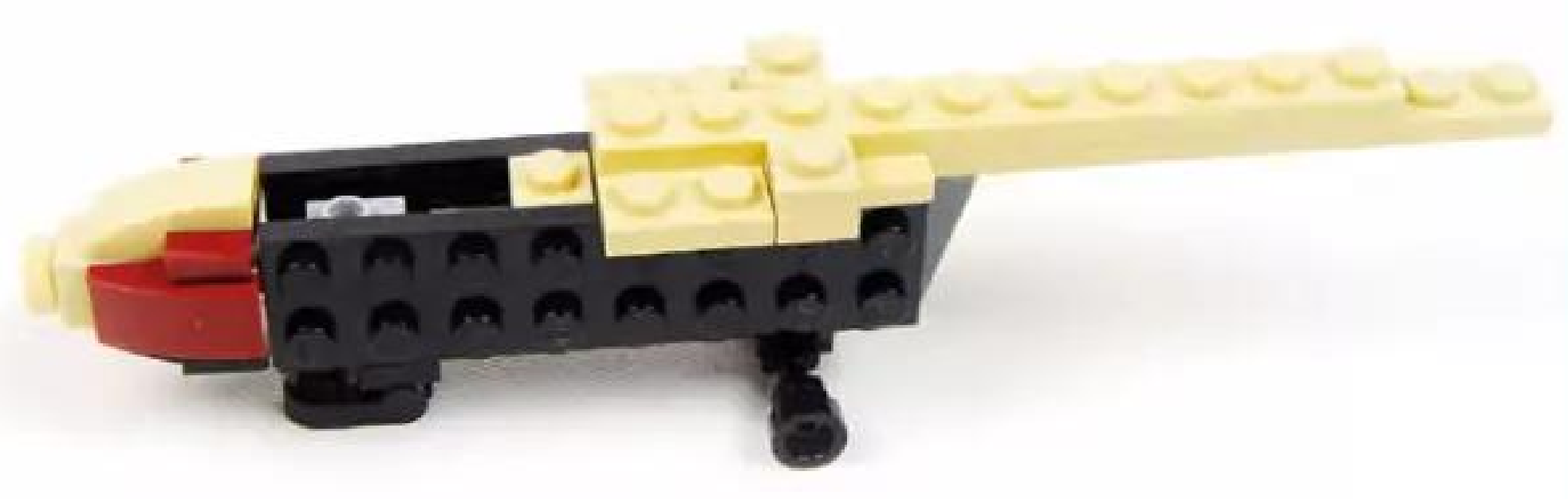

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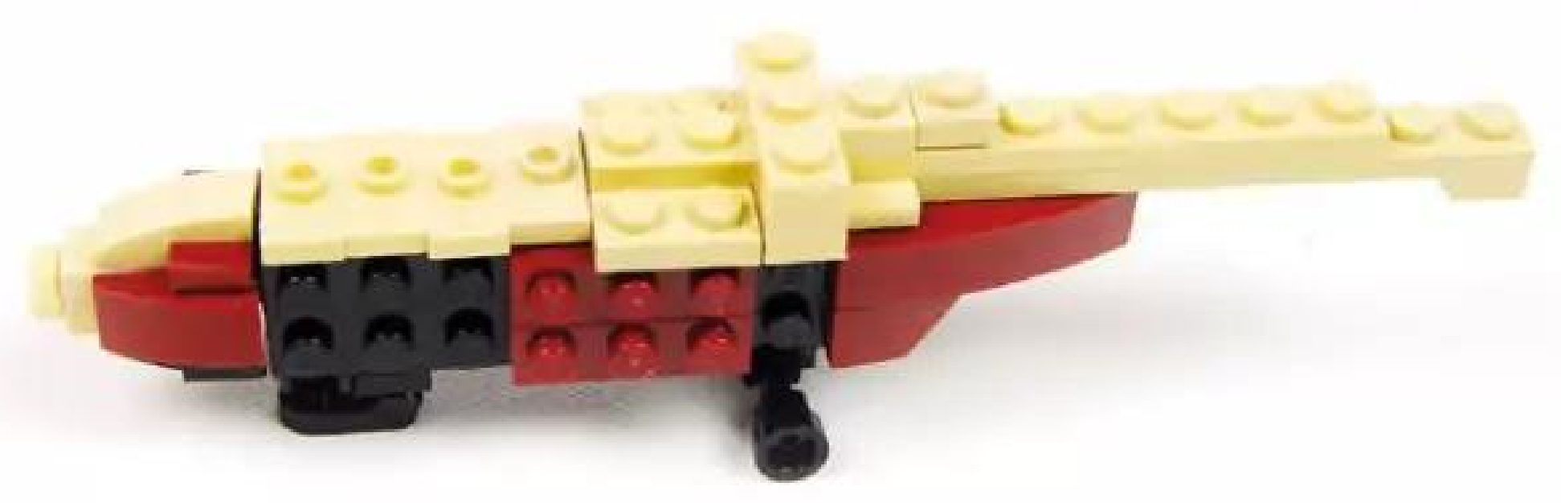

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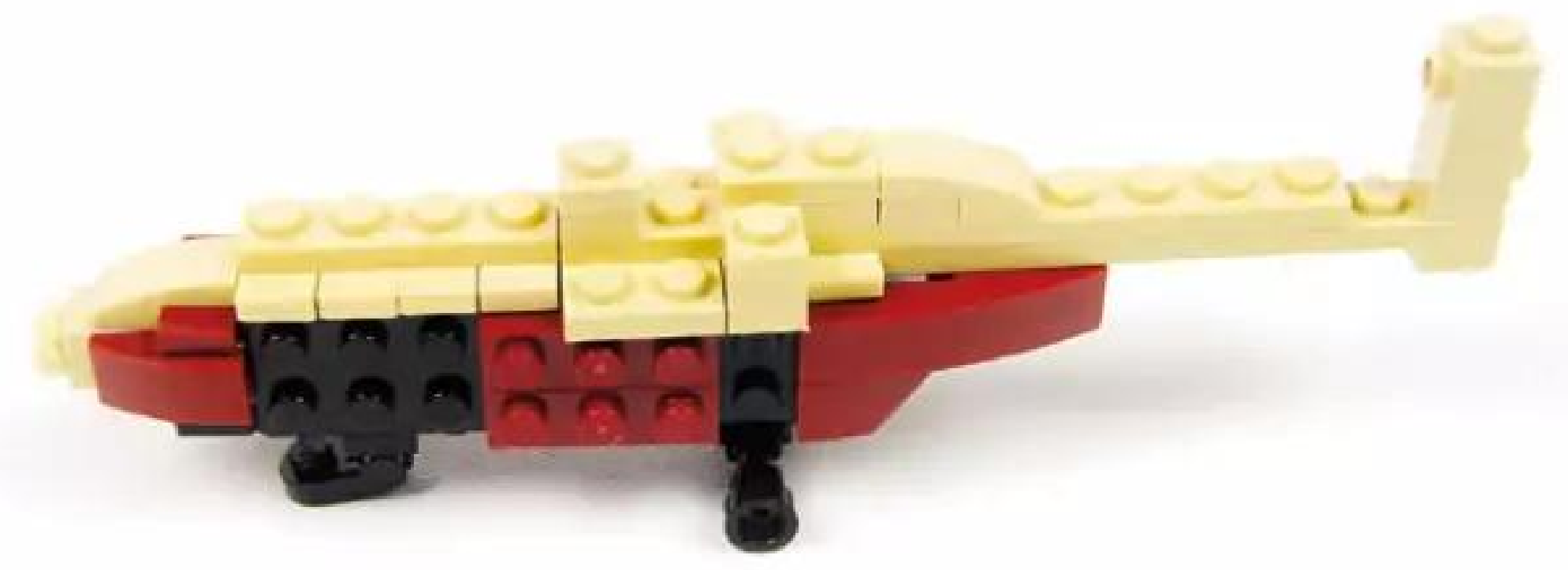

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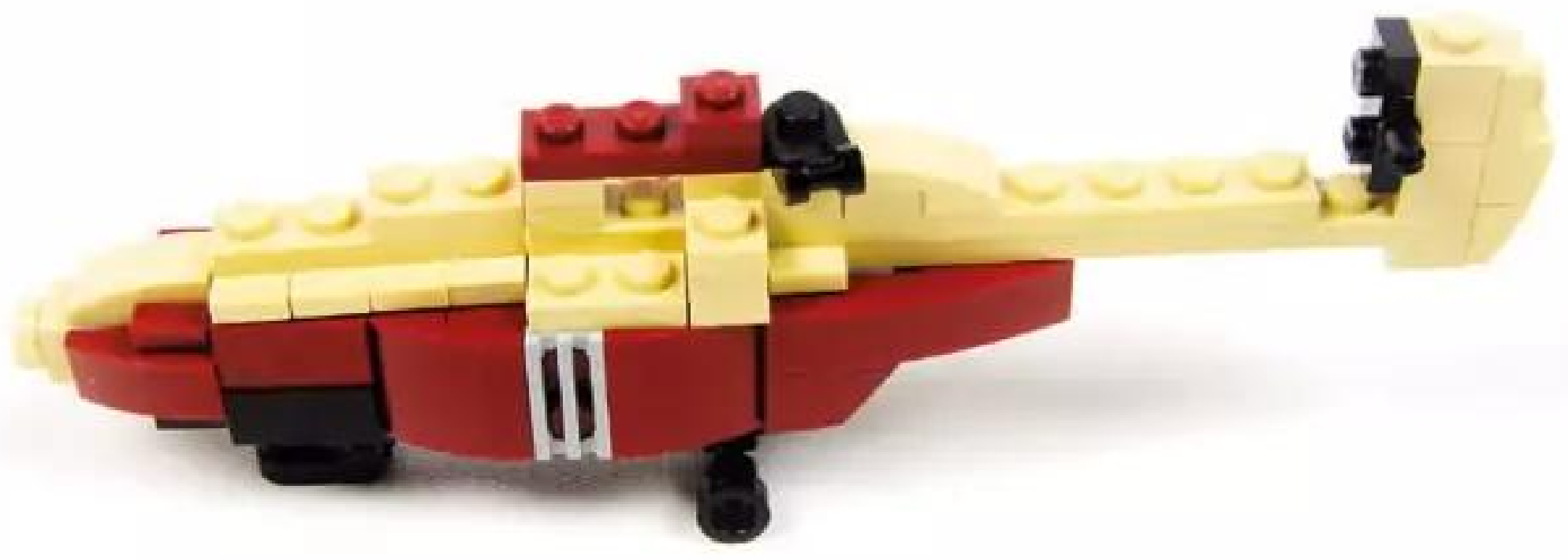

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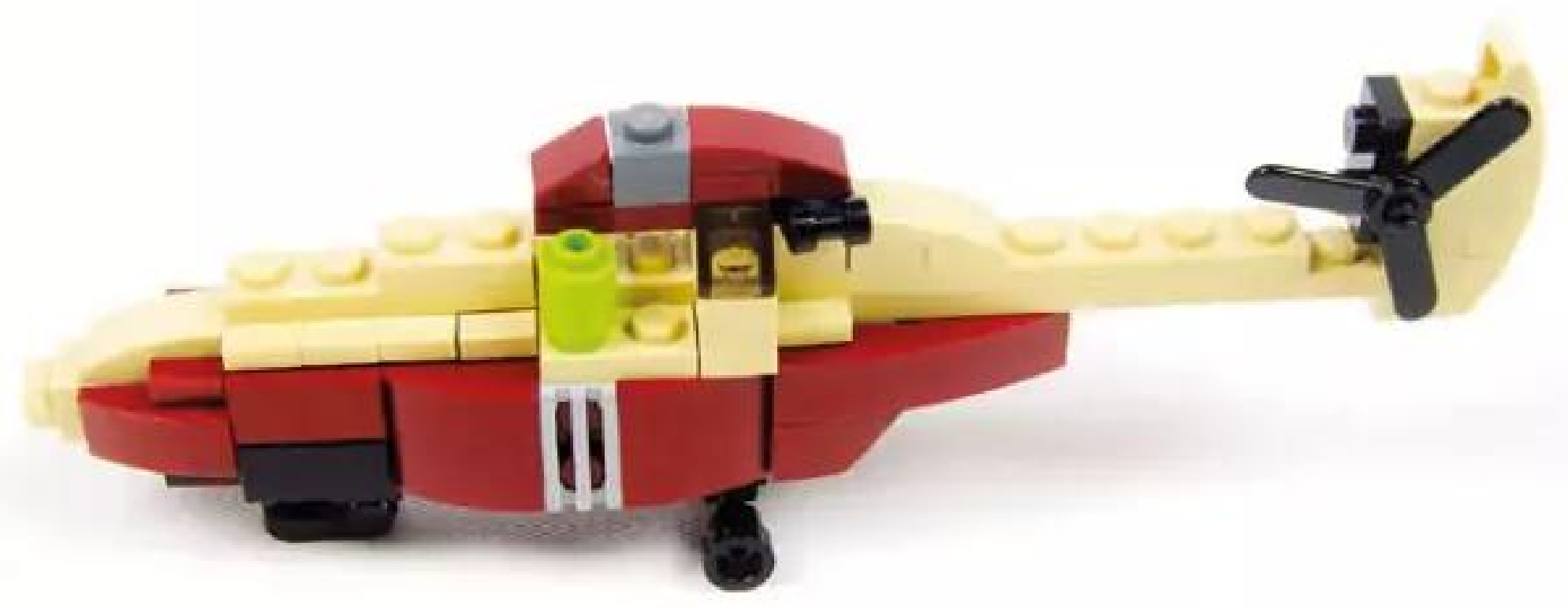

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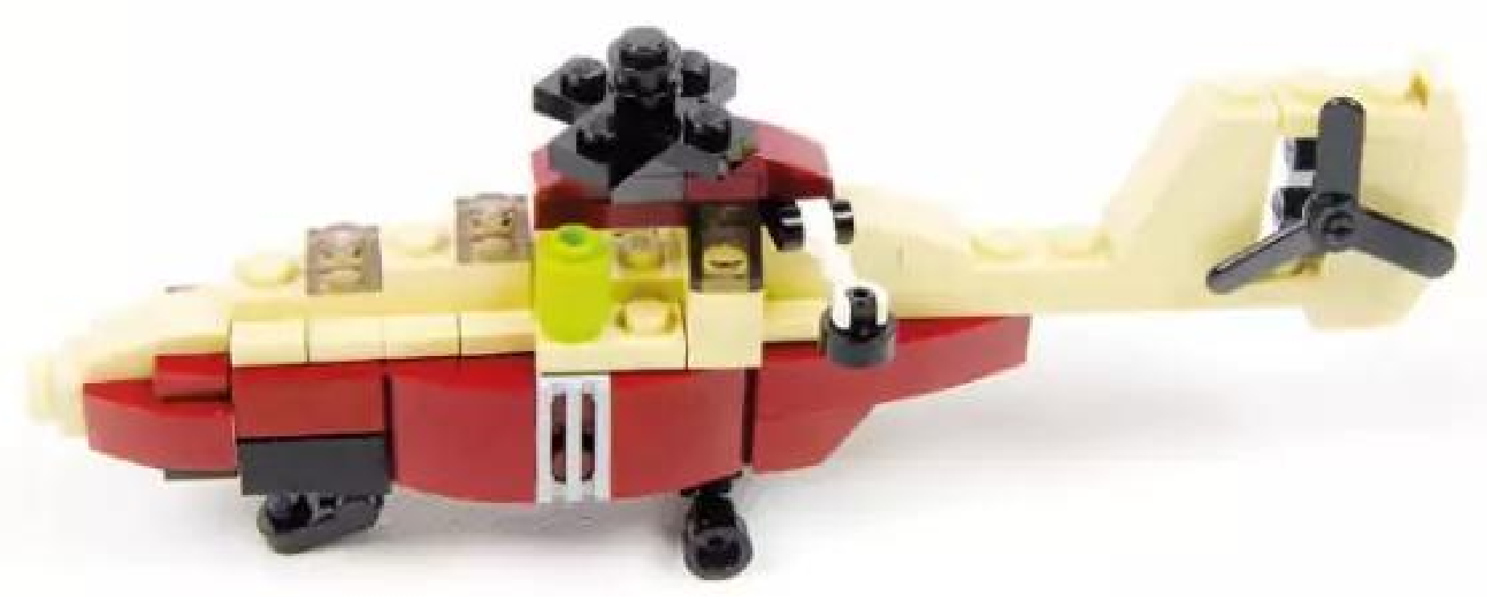

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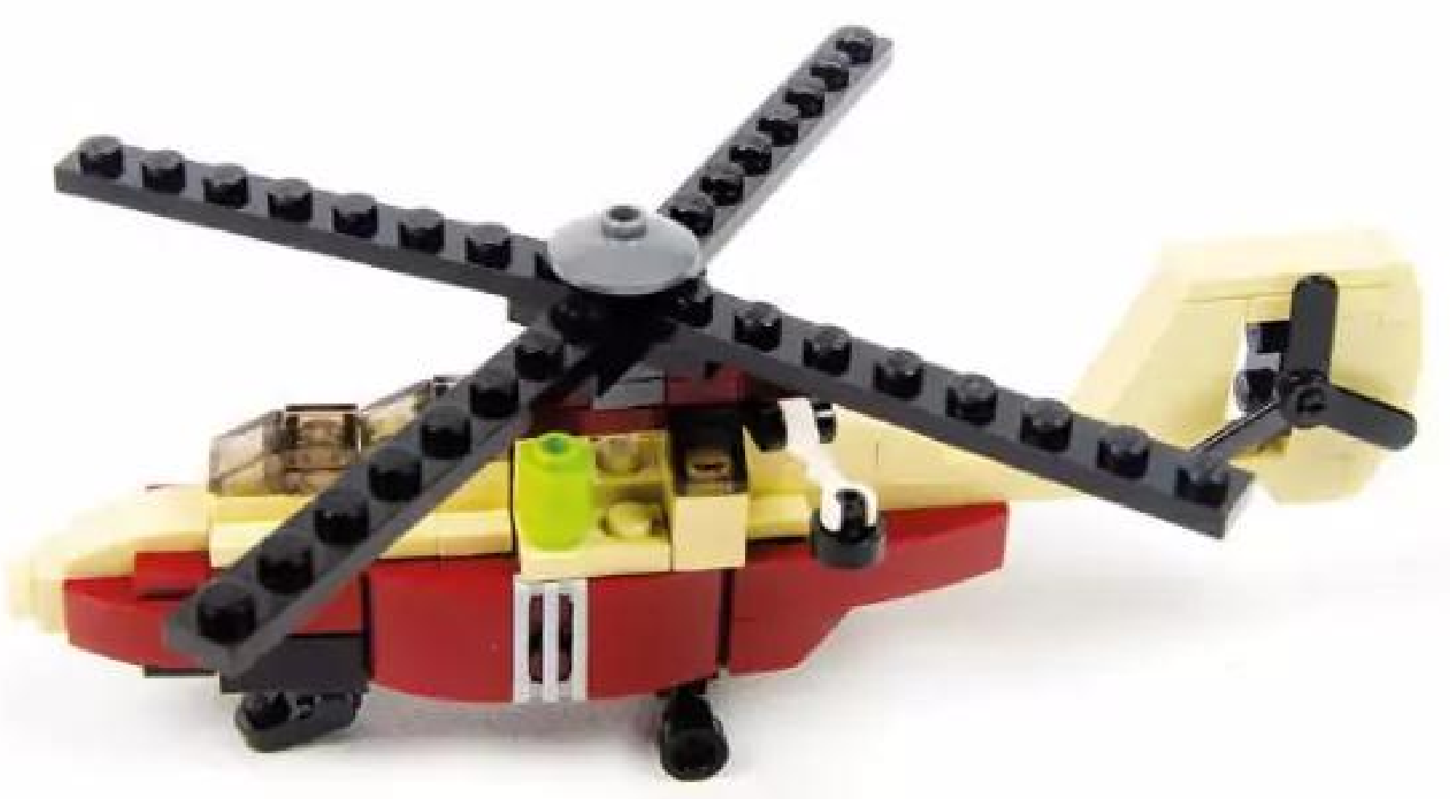
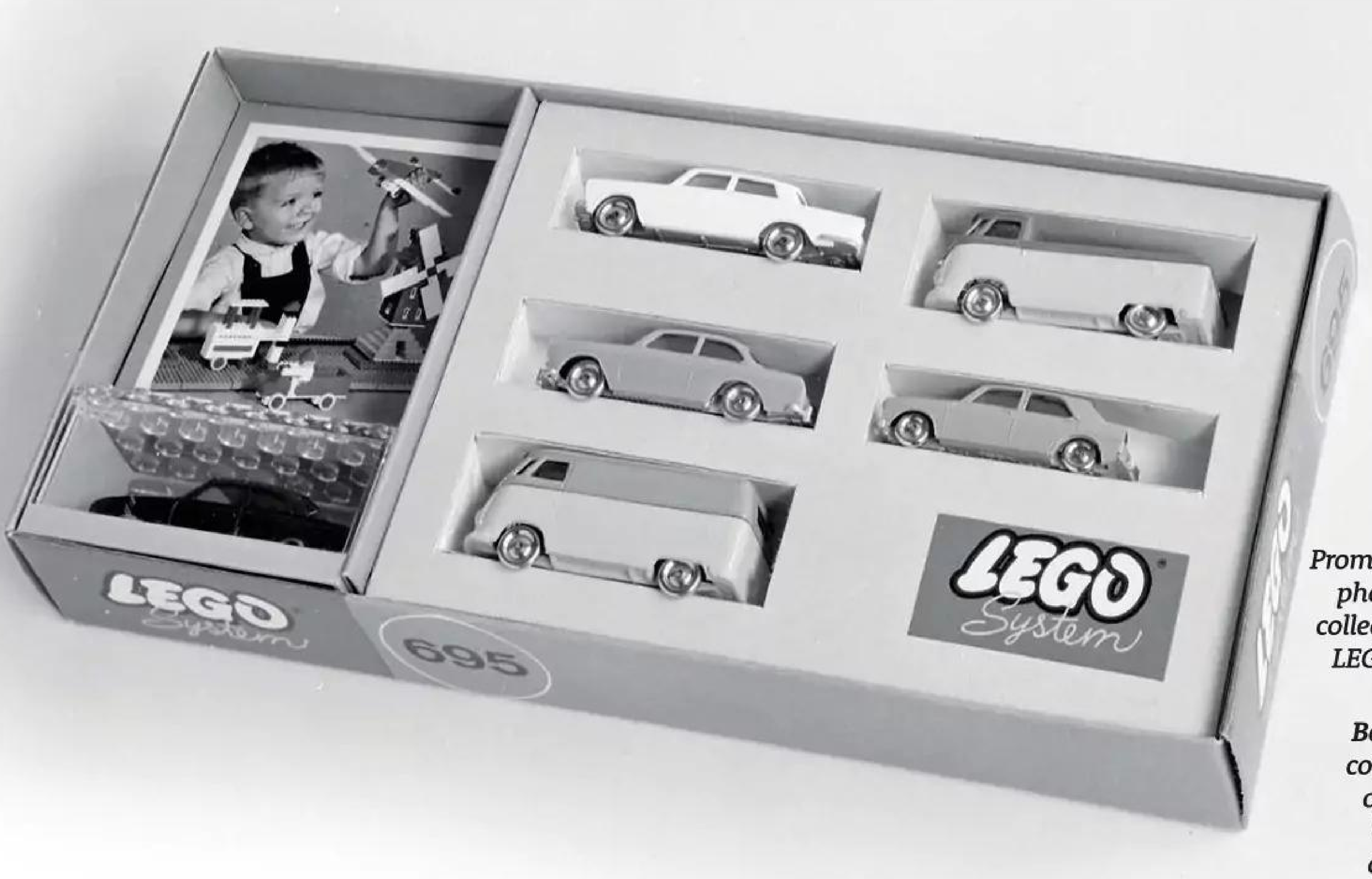


From the Vault

1:87 SCALE CARS

Some LEGO cars don't have to be built – back in the day, scale toy vehicles were included in the same boxes as bricks



Promotional photo of a collection of LEGO cars.

***Below:** A collection of LEGO cars on display.*

There was a time when the LEGO Group made plastic toys other than bricks. During the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the company manufactured all manner of plastic products without a stud or tube to be seen. In fact, bricks were an almost negligible slice of the portfolio right after World War II.

Because of this, when the company launched Town Plan, the cars included with sets were more in keeping with the company's past products than the bricks surrounding them. For years, a car dealership's worth of different makes and models rolled off the production lines in Billund.

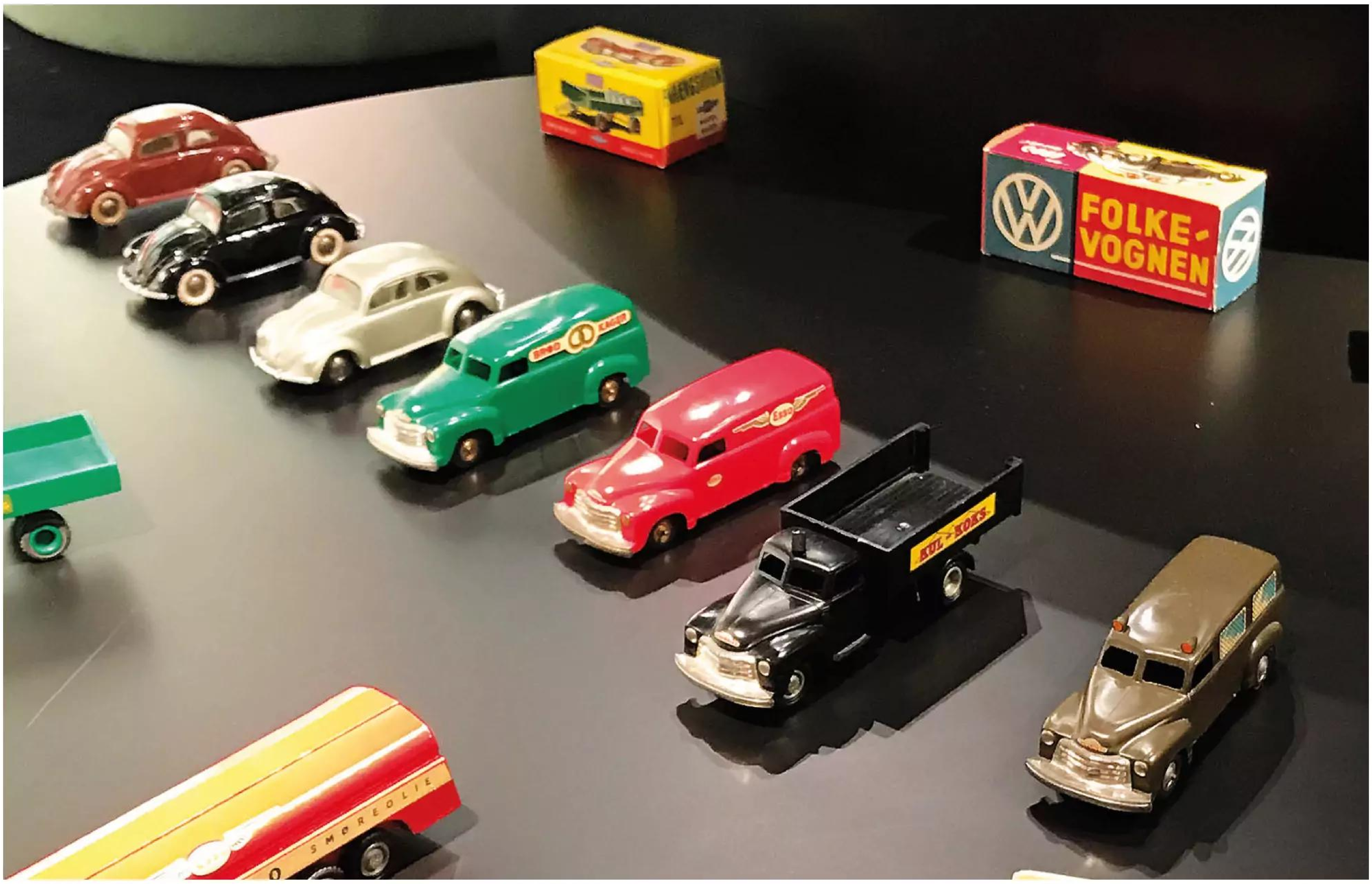
Town Plan was the first toy line inspired by second generation owner Godtfred Kirk Christiansen's System in Play. It consisted of buildings made of bricks placed on a printed mat with streets, green spaces and car parks. To add realism, a variety of other plastic parts were included. Trees, bushes, people, light poles and, most notably, vehicles, all looked like they came from a completely different product line to the bricks for the houses.

Where the buildings were crude, these other elements had texture and detail. They look much more like Matchbox or Hot Wheels products than LEGO toys.

This was not the first time the company had made scaled vehicles. Several cars, trucks and farm equipment, most famously the Ferguson tractor, had been manufactured since 1953 at different scales. For the System in Play a scale of 1:87 was chosen. This matched HO model train scale. Those toys were popular at that time, so the LEGO Group thought that Town Plan would be used in conjunction with toy trains to supplement and surround layouts with HO engines and track weaving in and around them. To match, the vehicles were produced at complementary scales – cars at 1:87 and trucks in 1:90.

These LEGO vehicles were produced throughout the entire life of Town Plan. Their peak was during the late 1950s and early 1960s before being reduced and phased out as brick-built vehicles took over the portfolio. Today, they are highly sought after by collectors. Because their production overlapped with the period in the company's history when lots of manufacturing was licensed to local companies in various countries, there are differences in the versions that were produced in and for specific regions.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI



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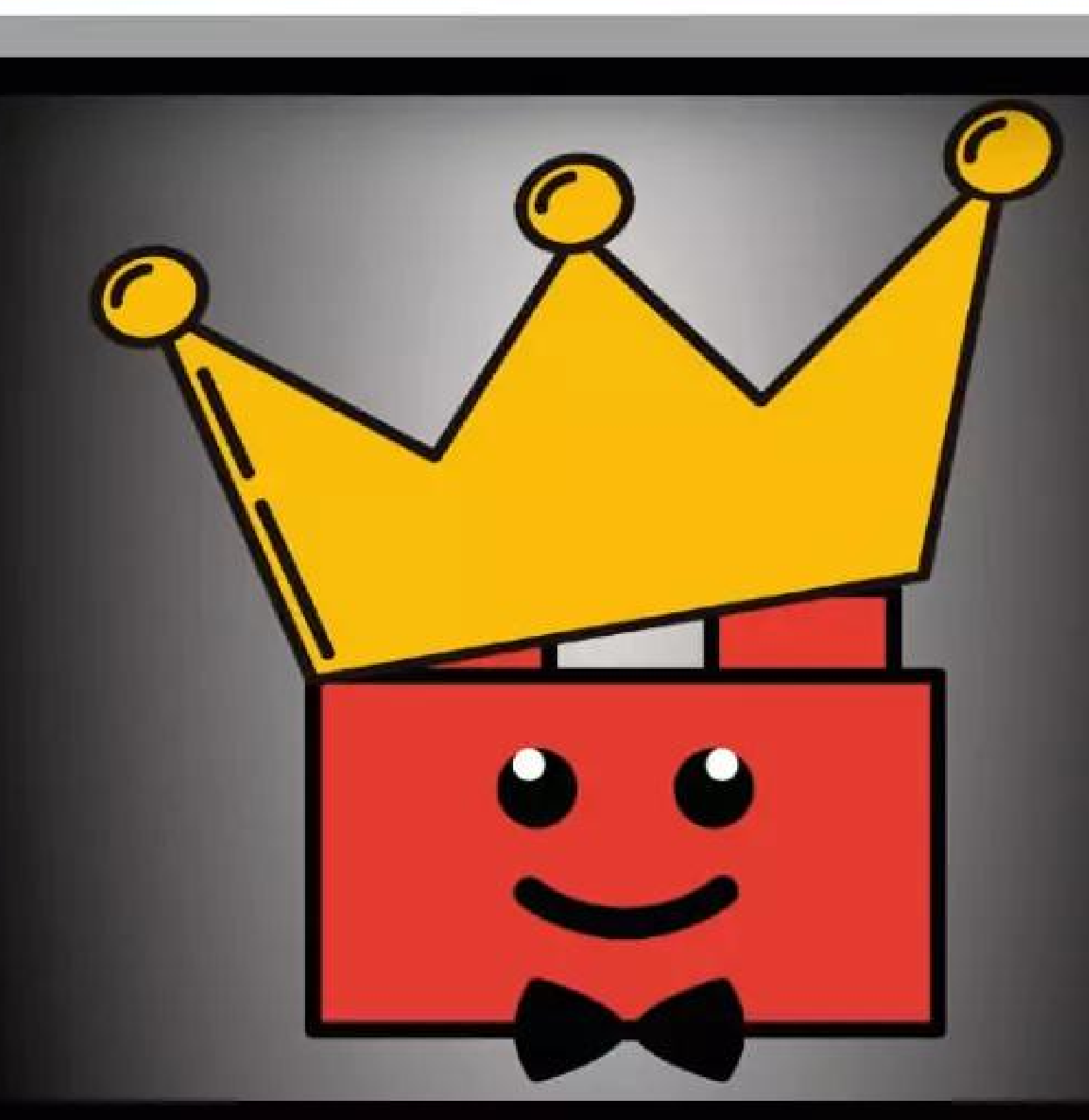

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